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THOSE THRILLING DAYS OF YESTERYEAR BY JACK C. HALDEMAN II
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THE **AMAZING** INTERVIEW: HAL CLEMENT

March
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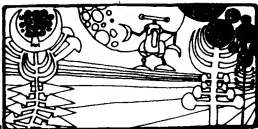
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**TED
WHITE**

EDITORIAL



MIDAMERICON MEMORIES: In last month's *FANTASTIC I* offered—in a rather hasty fill-in for a lost editorial—a facetious report on the appearance at the 1976 World Science Fiction Convention of a simulacrum of Robert A. Heinlein, who was, you will recall, that convention's Guest of Honor.

It was my conceit to label the individual who acted out the Guest of Honor role "a simulacrum" because in actual fact I was strongly disappointed in and disturbed by the actual behavior of the convention's Guest of Honor and the way in which the convention Committee dealt with him. If my characterization of Mr. Heinlein caused any of you distress, I apologize to you but remain firm in my conviction that the Committee and Mr. Heinlein did a great disservice to the convention attendees and to each other.

There is always a great danger when a figure in our field who has been venerated too long begins to believe that he deserves imperial treatment. The rude way in which Mr. Heinlein's retinue of bodyguards cleared out an elevator before he entered it was exceeded only in Mr. Heinlein's rudeness to the assembled convention when he made his Guest of Honor "speech."

I put the word 'speech' in quotes like that because Mr. Heinlein had in

fact no prepared speech at all—as all too soon became quite evident.

To be selected as Guest of Honor at the event of the year in the science fiction field is no little honor and deserves a proper appreciation and response. Robert A. Heinlein has been so honored on three occasions: in Denver in 1941, in Seattle in 1961, and in Kansas City in 1976. No other science fiction writer has been so honored. Indeed, a number of our best sf writers have yet to be honored *once*, although the honor is due them.

Mr. Heinlein has not been in good health in the last few years, and his dealings with some people in our field have been marked by unpleasantness. It was perhaps a questionable imposition to ask him to Kansas City in the first place, but implicit in his acceptance was a commitment he failed to keep.

When he stepped forward on the stage at Kansas City's Municipal Auditorium (where the annual Hugo Awards had just been presented), Mr. Heinlein delivered a raspberry to those who had asked him there and those who had come to hear him speak.

He spoke without any preparation except one: a small kitchen-type timer which he set at the outset to keep him within his self-imposed time-limit. He then began a rambling,
(cont. on page 116)

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Robert F. Young, whose most recent appearances here were "Above This Race of Men" (January, 1976) and "Ghur R'hut Urr" (June, 1976), returns with a novella for us in which he retraces the events of Xenophon's Anabasis from a unique point of view, making it this time—

ALEC'S ANABIS

ROBERT F. YOUNG

WHEN HE SAW the driverless scythed chariot bearing down on him, "Alexander the Lacedaemonian" did the only thing he could do: he jaited.

Historically speaking, he had no more business being in its path than he had being in the Battle of Cunaxa.

He wouldn't have been in its path if "Duris the Boeotian" hadn't thrown a stone at the runaway horse, causing it to shy.

The year was 401 B.C., and Alec, who worked for a twenty-first century A.D. pastacular company named YoreCo, had been assigned the job of pasttaping the sequence of events recorded by Xenophon in his *Anabasis*. Alec had journeyed to ancient Lydia via Transworld Timelines and, upon arriving in the capital city of Sardis, had joined the army of Greek mercenaries that comprised part of the heterogeneous forces Cyrus the Younger had mustered to overthrow his brother, Artaxerxes the King. From there, Alec had accompanied the Cyreian expedition through Lydia, Phrygia, Cilicia, Syria and Arabia, into Babylonian, where the Battle of Cunaxa took place.

When they heard that Artaxerxes's

armies were preparing to attack, the ten thousand Greek mercenaries had formed their line near the east bank of the river Euphrates. The troops of Clearchus constituted the extremity of the right wing, those of Menon the extremity of the left. Numbered among the *taxeis*, or battalions, in between was the *taxis* of Proxenus, among whose peltasts were included "Alexander the Lacedaemonian" and "Duris the Boeotian". On the Greeks' left were arrayed the rest of the Cyreian armies, commanded by Cyrus's best friend, Ariaeus. In the forefront, Cyrus himself headed some six hundred heavily armed horsemen.

Late in the afternoon Artaxerxes's armies could be seen advancing northward over the alluvial plain, preceded by a line of scythed chariots, so called because of the scythe-blades projecting obliquely from their axletrees.

Everything Alec's eyes and ears took in, the tiny tape-recorder hidden in the ridge of his custom-made helmet took in also. A slender dark-haired Athenian, whom he recognized as Xenophon, rode out and exchanged a few words with the would-be king,

Illustrated by Steve Fabian



then rode back and rejoined the Greek ranks. A short while later, Cyrus pounded off with his cavalry toward the center of the Persian line. By this time, the opposing forces were less than an eighth of a mile apart.

Shouting "A! la! la! la!" at the tops of their voices, the Greeks began to advance. To augment the stentorian battle cry, those so equipped began banging their lances against their shields. The troops facing them were those of Tissaphernes, Artaxerxes's second in command. As one, they broke ranks and fled. The scythed-chariot drivers, no less intimidated, abandoned their vehicles and followed, and the terrified horses came plunging into the Greek lines, dragging the lethal carts behind them.

Alec, who had boned up on the battle before booking passage for Sardis, had known what was going to happen, and quickly got out of the path of the nearest horse and chariot. But he hadn't known that "Duris the Boeotian" wanted him out of the picture. He still could have evaded the horse after the stone caused it to veer right, but the spinning scythe-blades were another matter. He *had* to jait—jump ahead in time—and he did.

Rematerializing on the plain approximately forty-eight hours in the future, he moved six paces to the left, tucked his javelin under his arm and, using his shield to deflect the warm wind blowing up from the south, lit one of the precious cigarettes he kept in an inner pocket of his leathern vest next to the compact cartridge case that held his micro-tapes. Water sparkled in the irrigation ditches that crisscrossed the region; the river Euphrates mirrored the blue Mesopotamian sky; distant trios and

quartets of date palms formed arboreal bouquets. The Cyreian forces were long gone, and all that remained of Artaxerxes's armies were a few scattered wicker shields and a dead horse.

Jaiting was a common accomplishment in the twenty-first century: everybody could do it. In fact, karate contests incorporating it had replaced tennis as America's No. 1 spectator sport. Nevertheless, Alec didn't think that "Duris the Boeotian"—who, it was now clear, was an agent-assassin employed by either PastCo or AgoCo, YoreCo's two rival companies—would jump ahead in time and try to finish what he'd started. Jait-jbit contests involved two arenas, one present and one future, which, of course, was the reason for their popularity. But this was 401 B.C. If the Greeks were to see a pair of peltasts repeatedly disappearing and reappearing on the battlefield, there would be a lot of questions to answer, regardless of who the winner was, and perhaps an accusation of murder to contend with as well.

So Alec smoked his nicotineless, tarless, tobacco-flavored cigarette with a relatively untroubled mind, and not till it was half gone did he stub it out and stash the butt in the inner pocket of his vest. Then he jbited—jumped back in time—rematerializing in the Greek ranks 2.1250 seconds after he'd disappeared. Both horse and chariot missed him by a comfortable margin, "Duris the Boeotian's" face fell, and he and Alec set out with their fellow peltasts and hoplites in pursuit of Tissaphernes's fleeing forces.

Meanwhile, Cyrus led his cavalry into the phalanx guarding Artaxerxes, put it to rout and wounded Artaxerxes in the chest. It was Cyrus's final act in his ambitious bid for the throne,

for a moment later a javelin struck him beneath the right eye, and he tumbled lifeless from his horse. The Persians cut off his head and his right hand. The moment Ariaeus heard the news he abandoned the Ten Thousand and fled northward with the rest of the Cyreian armies, Artaxerxes in pursuit.

THE GREEKS, busily engaged in trying to overtake Tissaphernes, knew nothing of the death of Cyrus nor of the retreat of Ariaeus, and Alec, mindful of the Ten Commandments of time travel, did not enlighten them. Victorious in their own right, they assumed that the battle was going in Cyrus's favor, and when Artaxerxes returned after plundering the Cyreian base camp and united his troops with those of Tissaphernes, they attacked the combined forces with such ferocity that Artaxerxes was forced to order a retreat.

The Ten Thousand followed their demoralized foe as far as a small village at the base of a hill. On the hill-top Artaxerxes's cavalry could be seen dispersing, and Clearchus, realizing that there was nothing to be gained in continuing the pursuit, ordered the Greeks to stack arms and rest. Alec took advantage of the lull, sought out "Duris the Boeotian" and told him in Aeolic that he'd like a word with him in private.

Presently the two men faced each other near the bank of an irrigation ditch, out of earshot but not out of sight of their nearest comrades-in-arms. "Duris the Boeotian" stood half a head taller than Alec and was half again as broad. His nose was more Roman than Grecian, and he had small porcine eyes the color of clay.

Abandoning Aeolic, Alec asked outright in Anglo-American, "PastCo or

AgoCo?"

"Duris the Boeotian" grinned. "PastCo. I gave myself away, didn't I?"

"You had me fooled completely before you threw that stone, and I can't figure out *why* you threw it. Granted, if you'd succeeded in getting me killed and had taken possession of my helmet and micro-tape cartridges, PastCo would have acquired the pastacular by default. But why didn't you wait till after I'd finished pasttaping the pastacular? Till after we'd reached Trebisond?"

"Because I think I can do a better job than you've been doing. You're an atavism. Pastacular audiences aren't interested in watching a bunch of greasy Greeks marching, eating and sleeping. It's what they do when they shack up in the villages that counts. You haven't been out of camp once since we left Sardis!"

Stung, Alec said, "I don't think you'd know enough to tape a sore finger, to say nothing of a pastacular."

"Maybe not. But I'm going to give it a try. So watch yourself, Mr. Alexander Vincent Henry. Old buddy. Before long, I'm going to be breathing down the back of your neck again."

"While you're breathing down the back of *my* neck," Alec said, "make sure no one's breathing down the back of *yours*."

"There won't be. If there was an AgoCo agent around, I'd have spotted him long before this."

"Thanks. I'll sleep better nights now that I know I've got only one agent-assassin to worry about."

"Duris" glowered at him for a moment, then turned and walked away.

LEFT ALONE, Alec wondered for at least the hundredth time why the Bureau of Historitravel had abolished the free-enterprise system with respect to pasttravel and had taken over the distribution of pastacular equipment. If the three pastacular companies could pasttape a particular series of pastevents without having to pull strings to obtain an exclusive franchise, agent-assassins like "Duris the Boeotian" would be relegated to the ranks of the unemployed.

In addition to its other duties, the Bureau also monitored Transworld Timelines, but only routinely. Anyone could visit any part of the past so long as he took nothing with him (other than contraceptives) that would clash with the period he planned to visit. And if he wished to cheat a little, there were free-lance timeship operators called "timers" who, for the right dollar, would take him anywhen he wanted to go with no questions asked. But most people were too poor to time-travel, and the few who could afford to generally limited their past-excursions to twentieth-century Disneyland.

Alec decided to pasttape the village at the base of the hill and he set off toward it across the intervening fields and ditches. It turned out to be deserted, but that was all right: it would still provide good background. He was pasttaping a picturesque street—that is to say, walking along it, looking this way and that—when a faint *click* came from the ridge of his helmet, apprising him that the micro-tape cartridge in the hidden tape-recorder needed replacing. After making the change, he put the replaced cartridge in the cartridge case. Each

cartridge contained ten micro-tapes. There were five cartridges altogether just enough to cover the Up March (*Anabasis*)—Sardis to Cnuaxa—and the Down March (*Katabasis*): Cnuaxa to Trebisonod. Thus far, he had filled two.

He had just returned the cartridge case to the inner pocket of his vest when a girl ran out of a nearby brick-and-bitumen dwelling and threw herself at his feet.

Her peri-like face was thin, her large eyes brown and imploring. Gazing up at him, she began talking rapidly in one of the Achaemenian dialects he had hypno-taught himself while preparing for his assignment. "My name is Sarai, O Great One. Take pity on me! My people would have sold me to Orontes, had not the armies of Cyrus appeared. Now they have fled, disdaining to take me with them because I am no longer of any worth to them. Let me accompany you, O Great One, wherever you go. I will cook for you and pour your barley-wine. I will gather the choicest fruits along the way, I—"

"Stop it!" Alec interrupted, finally finding his voice. "I'm nothing but a common peltast and I couldn't take you with me even if I wanted to, and I don't. So stop groveling and get to your feet!"

Eyes still fixed on his face, she obeyed. A red and blue shawl partially covered her long black hair, and the two colors were repeated in the rest of her apparel—the red in her loose-fitting blouse and the blue in her calf-length skirt. She was barefoot. He estimated her age at about sixteen.

She launched another entreaty: "But if you leave me here I will surely perish, O Great One! I have neither barley-meal nor milk, nor any

means of getting them. I am alone and frightened and without friends. If my people return and find me here they will drive me away, or, even worse, sell me to the first fat prince who comes along. I am hungry, I am frightened, I do not know what to do."

Alec looked at her helplessly. He was a good ten years older than she was, which made him responsible for her in a way. Not only that, she reminded him a little of his kid sister—an eventuality sufficient in itself to swing the balance in her favor.

"Can you coo?" he asked.

She stared at him. "Coo?"

"Yes. Coo. The Greek army has no food with it at the moment, but in a little while we'll be returning to our base camp. So if you'll follow at a discreet distance and wait on the outskirts, I'll bring you something to eat."

"But why must I make a noise like a turtledove?"

"So I can find you without you having you show yourself to the soldiers."

"But why shouldn't I show myself to the soldiers?"

"Because you shouldn't—that's why. Now stop asking questions and listen: the camp of the camp-followers is separate from the main camp. Wait outside it on the side toward the river and far enough away so the dogs won't bother you, and every little while coo like this." He demonstrated. "Try it."

"Coo," she said. "Coo! Coo! Coo!"

"That's fine. When I hear you, I'll know where to look and I'll give you the food."

However, he gave her no food that night. He'd forgot that Artaxerxes's armies had plundered Cyrus's supplies. Angrily he pasttaped the looted wagons and the fuming Greeks;

then, confiscating a blanket that the Persians had overlooked, he left the main camp and began skirting the camp of the camp-followers. "Coo!" Sarai said suddenly, almost in his ear. "Coo! Coo! Coo!"

He handed her the blanket, told her that thanks to Artaxerxes no food was available, gave her a half-daric and told her to go back to her village. Promptly she spread the blanket on the ground, lay down on half of it and covered herself with the other half. "Good night, O Great One," she said.

He sighed. Then he pulled her to her feet, took back the half-daric, wrapped the blanket around her shoulders and led her into the camp-followers' camp. There, for a full daric, he bought wagon-space for her from a Greek weapons-repairman named Anytus and exacted from the old man a solemn promise to keep a fatherly eye on her. After making arrangements with a sandal-maker to make her a pair of sandals, he returned to the main camp, the richer—or the poorer—for having gained one Babylonian slave girl.

THE NEXT MORNING the Greeks learned that Cyrus had been killed and that Ariaeus had retreated and was now encamped on the outskirts of the village of Iterna, some twenty stadia distant. Clearchus proposed the Ariaeus try for the throne himself, and Menon and Cheirisophus left for the Cyreian camp to broach the idea to Ariaeus. No sooner had they left than envoys arrived from the camp of the King with orders for the Greeks to surrender. Clearchus told them that the word wasn't contained in any of the Greek dialects, and sent them packing.

Later in the day, the Greeks slaughtered some of the baggage-

cattle and began barbecuing the choicer cuts over fires built of wicker shields they had collected on the battlefield the day before. Alec selected a steak that looked reasonably tender, impaled it on the point of his javelin and roasted it till it was well done; then he sought out Sarai in the camp of the camp-followers. He found her kneeling beside an irrigation ditch. She had just washed her hair and was combing it with a makeshift comb fashioned of reeds. Wet, it was even darker than he remembered it, and fell in black and glistening waterfalls past her peri-like face and patterned her shoulders with black arabesques. She looked more like a princess than a peasant, and he should have been pleased. Instead, he was annoyed, and he handed her the steak without a word, and walked away.

When he got back to the main camp, Menon and Cheirisophus had returned from Iterna. Ariaeus, they said, considered himself unworthy of the throne of Persia, and suggested that, since he planned to move his armies northward in the morning, the Greeks join him at once. Clearchus convinced the other generals that this would be the most sensible course to follow, pointing out that the Greek army was stranded in the center of a hostile empire, Zeus alone knew how many parasangs from home, and that the armies of Ariaeus would afford them some protection at least. Accordingly, the Ten Thousand reformed their ranks and, on the alert for a possible attack by Tissaphernes, marched cross-country to Iterna. There, the two forces were drawn up, a boar, a bull and a ram were sacrificed, and Clearchus and Ariaeus took formal oaths not to betray each other.

Alec, aware of the worthlessness of Ariaeus's oath, looked on with cynical eyes from the ranks of Proxenus's peltasts. Down the line from him, "Duris the Bocotian" also looked on, his face impassive. Since the scythed-chariot incident, the two men had steered clear of each other, but it was a temporary detente at best.

To date, Alec had made only one friend—an Arcadian named Pasion. As far back as Sardis he'd felt that Pasion could be trusted, and since it was *comme i faut* for Greek soldiers to have buddies, he had made the Arcadian his.

After the arms had been stacked, he and his friend prepared for sleep in the tent they shared. They had just lain down on their woollen blankets when Pasion, without preamble, said, "I find it strange, Alexander, that a peltast with a slave such as yours prefers not to sleep with her."

Jolted, Alec sat up. "What makes you think I have a slave?"

"This morning when you took a portion of meat into the camp of the camp-followers I followed you at a distance. I reasoned that you would not go to such lengths to appease the appetite of a common Cyprian, and that this being so, you must have found someone more worthwhile. I reasoned furthermore that since you have disdained even casting a glance at any of the women in the villages we have quartered in, this slave of yours would be worth looked at—even from afar. I was right."

"You don't understand," Alec said. "She's not my slave. She forced herself on me. She means nothing to me."

"In that case," Pasion said, starting to get up, "I will sleep with her myself."

Alec seized his arm and pulled him

back down. He got up himself. "I've changed my mind. I'll sleep with her. And you, Pasion, if you know what's good for you, will stay away from her."

He rolled up his blanket and put his helmet back on. Pasion regarded him with puzzled eyes. Then his eyes cleared and he smiled a knowing smile. "Forgive me, Alexander. I did not know you were in love with her."

But I'm not in love with her! Alec started to say. Then he changed his mind and left the tent. There was no way under the sun he could convince Pasion that he was going to sleep *beside* Sarai, not *with* her, nor that his sole motive was to protect her. Besides, he wasn't sure that it would be wise to convince him. The fourth Time Commandment might be a paraphrased bromide, but the pasttraveler who consistently broke it seldom got back to when he came from. *You will not, when in Rome, behave contrary to the way which the Romans behave.*

He found Sarai sitting just within the perimeter of firelight cast by a big bonfire round which sat a number of Greek soldiers and a half dozen "wagon women" drinking barley-wine out of bowls. Behind her in the shadows loomed the burly figure of old Anytus.

Alec pulled her to her feet. "It's time you were in bed," he said.

He tossed the weapons-repairman another Daric and told Sarai to lead the way to the old man's wagon. She didn't say a word till they reached it; then, gazing up into his eyes, "Are we going to sleep as one, O Great One?" she asked.

He was scandalized. "Of course we're not!" He climbed up into the wagon bed, saw that she had already spread her blanket, and spread his

own beside it. Despite his best efforts, it overlapped hers. He reached down and took her hand. "Up we go."

Standing beside him in the starlight, she said, "I did not think you would come tonight, O Great One. I thought you hated me."

"My name is Alexander, I'm not great, and I don't hate you in the least." He glanced down at her feet. "Didn't that sandal-maker make your shoes yet?"

"He will have them finished tomorrow."

Alec removed his helmet, automatically turning off the pressure-switch that activated and deactivated the battery-powered micro-tape recorder. Then he lay down on his blanket and Sarai lay down on hers. After bidding her good-night, he closed his eyes. A long while later, still wide awake, he opened them and stole a look at her. Her starlit face, relaxed in sleep, seemed a dead ringer for his kid sister's. Not his kid sister's face as it was today, for Marianne had left her teens behind her, but as it had been that fateful day when she had told him the Terrible Truth. The thought of the Terrible Truth made him wince. At the same time, it intensified his feeling of responsibility for Sarai. He would have to find a good home for her, that was all there was to it. Maybe he could find a respectable family in one of the villages who would be willing to adopt her. A kid like her had no business following an army. Yes, he would find a good home for her, that was what he would do.

III

Thanatos

CLEARCHUS and Ariaeus decided to conduct the retreat along a different

route from that followed on the Up March and to try to reach the Greek colony of Trebisonde on the Euxine Sea.

After leaving the village of Iternia, the Cyrean armies headed northward toward Media. On the afternoon of the second day, the Greeks discerned a number of baggage cattle grazing on a distant hillside. Obviously Artaxerxes's armies could not be far off, and it was probable that the King had the Cyrean forces under surveillance.

That night, the Greeks quartered in a group of villages from which, unfortunately, the villagers had fled, taking their comestibles and their livestock with them. Early the next morning, two envoys arrived from the camp of the King with word that Artaxerxes wished to negotiate a truce. Clearchus stalled, saying that his men were hungry and not in the mood for truces, and the envoys obligingly guided them to a village farther north where food was available. They were joined later by the armies of Ariaeus.

Within the next few days, with Tissaphernes acting in the role of plenipotentiary, a truce was agreed upon. Artaxerxes promised to conduct the Ten Thousand safely back to Greece and to provide them whenever possible with the opportunity to purchase provisions. In return, the Greek generals promised that their men would forebear pillaging.

Precisely what role Ariaeus and his armies were to play was not made clear.

Tissaphernes returned to the Persian camp to make arrangements for an escort. Twenty-one days passed. Ariaeus was visited repeatedly by relatives who were part of Artaxerxes's retinue and who assured him that the King did not hold his complicity against him. Not surprisingly, the

Greek generals, who already distrusted Tissaphernes, began to distrust Ariaeus also, and when the former arrived with one Persian army and Orontes, Artaxerxes's brother-in-law, arrived with another, Clearchus issued orders for the Greeks to march as far from their escort as possible and to keep a discreet distance between themselves and the armies of Ariaeus.

Five days later, after crossing a wide canal, the Ten Thousand reached the river Tigris. They had dropped considerably behind both their escort and the armies of Ariaeus, and neither of the two forces was anywhere to be seen. A bridge, consisting of thirty-seven flat-bottomed boats lashed together, spanned the stream, and Clearchus, assuming that Tissaphernes, Orontes and Ariaeus had already crossed over it and being in no hurry to cross over it himself, ordered the Greeks to make camp next to a park-like forest.

The forest fringed the western environs of the city of Sitace. Clearchus, in keeping with the terms of the truce, ordered the city placed off-limits and sentries posted at intervals along the edge of the forest. Desirous of pasttaping the city if for no other reason than to discredit "Duris the Boeotian's" snide remark concerning his pasttaping ability, Alec tried to talk one of the sentries into letting him pass. In vain. He was standing disconsolately by the arms pile when Xenophon and Proxenus appeared walking side by side along the forest's edge. Just as they came opposite the arms pile, a sentry hurried up to them escorting a frightened looking individual in Persian apparel. "This man, O Proxenus," the sentry said, "claims to be a messenger from Ariaeus and desires to speak to you."

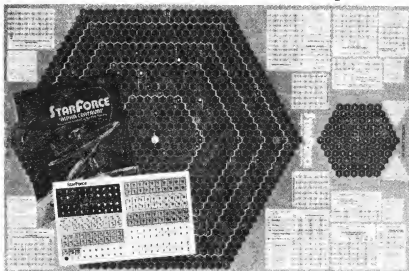
Proxenus dismissed the sentry and

(cont. on page 88)

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BARRY N. MALZBERG

Barry Malzberg's love for this field sometimes overpowers his desire to quit it; the result is this new story and several more which we have on hand. . .

SHIBBOLETH

NO. No thank you very much; if it's all the same to you I'd rather stand. Stand and pace; you've got a nice airy office here and I'd just feel better, walking back and forth for a little while, smoking this cigarette if you don't mind and trying to walk off the tension. I've been on my feet all morning, four hours, bumping around the offices in this building, trying to get in and see someone and when you build up that kind of nervous fatigue you have to let down in stages. If you know what I mean.

That's Gerald over there, by the door. My son, Gerald. He's ten years old. Say hello to Mr. Johnson, will you Gerald? just so he can see that you walk and talk just like a normal American child. That's it. Thank you, Gerald. Now, if you'll just wait outside in the reception room—that's all right, isn't it Mr. Johnson? he can wait in your reception room can't he? I don't mean to appropriate the interview here but it's best . . . thanks very much—the gentleman and I are going to talk for a little while. Yes, Gerald. Thanks very much. I'll be out in just a few moments.

Now we can get down to business. I feel better when he's away from me, a terrible thing to say about your own son and just ten years old last April, but it's the god's honest truth so help me and so be it and I'm not going to misrepresent the situation here. You'd

feel the same way if you were in my position. Be grateful that you're not.

The boy is telepathic. Don't look at me that way; it's the absolute truth and when I'm finished talking you can call him in for a demonstration and have him prove it any way you wish. I'll leave the room. I'll leave the building, I'll leave the *city* if you desire and you can run him through any test you want. He'll read your thoughts right down to the subconscious level, he'll call twenty-five cards out of twenty-five in a deck you shuffle yourself and go through, he'll tell your pretty little secretary exactly what she did last night. If she was a bad girl then God help him and her both because Gerald doesn't really understand most of what he picks up. He can merely do it by rote, like a tape recorder. He *is* only ten years old, you know. In most respects he's quite a normal boy and he has no idea of the dimensions of his talent. Ever since he began manifesting it two years ago I've kept him out of school and pretty well secluded and have tried to shield him from understanding what he's got there. As far as the boy is concerned right now, *everybody* can read minds. He just doesn't think that there's anything extraordinary in his ability. Once he does and he'll find out sooner or later, God help the world, that's all I have to say. God help the world. One

thing living through this with my wife over the past years has done; it's made the two of us religious people. We've cultivated, after our initial panic, faith. Without faith in the essential goodness of things and the essential sense in Gerald having a talent like this where would we be now? that's what I ask. Don't answer that, Mr. Johnson.

The boy is telepathic. All right; you can stare at me like that, I wouldn't believe myself either, when I'm finished talking you call him in and do anything you want to prove it to yourself. In the meantime he'll sit out there quietly and read a magazine and swing his little legs. He's a well-disciplined boy. The point is: what would you have done if you were in a position like mine? If you were an ordinary man in ordinary circumstances, no real background, no education, certainly no scientific background and you found out that your only child was a telepath? It's very easy to talk about these things in the abstract but believe me, once you start to *live* something like this, things turn around. You'd realize then. Not that I'm wishing this on you. No, I wouldn't wish it on a dog.

I didn't take him to psychiatrists and I didn't take him to psychologists. They simply would have thought that I was crazy and once they ran tests on the boy just to get rid of me and found out what they had they probably would have panicked and locked him up. They run a straight pipeline to the government, don't tell me I'm paranoid, it's the truth: the country is full of nut-cases who could be very dangerous if they weren't reported to the FBI and this would be no nut-case, this would be something that obviously could win the cold war for them. For the government. The boy

seems to be telepathic at a range of miles if he can just tune in and get a fix on the person he wants to read. They could have used him to pick up diplomats and generals: flown him to the battlefields and gotten the enemy's plans in advance. Those lunatics would have thought that they could win the war with him. That was what would have happened if I had taken him to a psychiatrist and you know it Mr. Johnson as well as I do. These are terrible times in which we're living.

So what else? Could I take him to the school authorities? It would have been the same thing. As it is I've been through hell these years fighting through courts and whatnot for the right to educate the boy at home simply because I will *not* send him back to the schoolyards. There were some very bad incidents there as you can imagine because he was picking up thoughts whose significance he didn't even realize. And repeating them.

I think I'll take a chair now. I feel a little less tense; just knowing that I'm in your office and you've heard me through this far relaxes me. You're the only man I've gotten into to talk to in this whole building, in five days of traipsing around Manhattan. I'll admit you're the only man who's given me an interview and just looking at you, seeing how kind and understanding you are, the fact you've let me into your office and heard me out, gives me confidence. I have a feeling I'll be all right now. If you don't mind I'll smoke another cigarette if that's all right with you. Thank you. Thank you very much. The truth is that I'm a nervous wreck.

You see, the solution came to me finally and only after a great deal of thought. I have to turn Gerald over to a good talent agent, someone like

yourself Mr. Johnson. The entertainment industry God knows isn't a pipeline to the government, it's just a business, a business like my own—I'm a grocer by the way—or banking or the financial district. Essentially you have to stand up to the profit and the loss. You have to come out ahead on the statement at the end of the month. If you do you go to the next month and if you don't you change your methods. That's America! That's business! You're not interested in a telepath from a military or medical point of view the way these psychiatrists or school authorities would be. You're a businessman. Just like me. I knew that I had to take him to a talent agent and let the agent take it from there.

You can put him in theatres or you could put him into television. He could do private parties or maybe even go into a revue-type format, something like Greenwich Village, you know? Probably he could make a hundred, five hundred thousand dollars a year and who in the government would ever care to check up on him? he'd just be another act, another specialty like Dunninger or whatever his name is or was. Who believes in stage telepaths?

I figured it all out. I know that it's the right idea and for myself I only want good handling for the boy and twenty percent, make it fifteen percent of the gross. After all I'm his father. But I've had hell until I got to your office, sheer hell: would you believe that I've not gotten past a receptionist in twenty-five tries until right now? You could not imagine the New York receptionist Mr. Johnson when you see her from the other end of the desk. These women may be beautiful but they are implacable. Implacable.

But that's all behind me now. I'm

in your office thank God and I've said everything I need to say and now my only and last question is: does this interest you? Will you take him on? Of course you'll want to run tests and you can call the boy right in now and do anything you want with him. I'll take a long walk. I'll look at the potted palms in the lobby. You can prove that the boy can do it on his own.

Gerald. Gerald? What are you doing back here? Weren't you told, didn't I tell you to stay right out there in that reception room until Mr. Johnson called you?

Oh. Oh. I see, I see the two men with you. Excuse me. Excuse me, gentlemen. This must all have been a sort of misunderstanding. Gerald and I will be heading home directly now. Thank you for your time, Mr. Johnson. Actually it was an elaborate hoax.

It was a hoax, don't believe a word of it. Actually I'm a harmless sort of lunatic, a little out of my head. Excuse me. Don't show me your identification, gentlemen. I don't want to know *who* you are. My son and I were just leaving. We're leaving right now.

What did you say, Gerald? Who did you say that we're with? The Federal Bureau of what?

All right. All right. That was very stupid of you Mr. Johnson. Because you may think that you were only doing your country a service but the way I've figured this, the way I see it, in about six months there won't be a country.

Do you think the enemy, knowing we have something like Gerald, could afford not to give the first strike?

Don't answer that, son. Just keep your mouth closed and let's all go off with these two men and don't answer like your life depended on it.

—BARRY N. MALZBERG

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OUR VANISHING TRICERATOPS

JOE PUMILIA & STEVEN UTLEY

Illustrated by Tony Gleeson

"TRACKS!" called Daniel, across the Paleocene wilderness. In the moment of almost-silence that followed his cry, the loneliness of the unpeopled past rushed in to engulf him. He shivered and lowered his voice. "Big ones, Dow."

"Fresh?" inquired Dow, a low, pleasantly modulated voice in Daniel's helmetphones.

The voice she loves to hear, Daniel thought with a flash of the old bitterness. Then he said, "Graviportal quadruped. Big as an elephant's prints, and fresh, very fresh." Impossibly fresh.

"Stay put. Be with you as soon as I get the rest of my samples."

"Right. Hurry."

Miles away, Jhimenex terminated his rest period. He stirred and bumped gently against the yielding walls of his fluid-filled sac in the heart of the chronotron. His enormous eyes were sucked into optivisors, welding his optic nerves to visual receptors built into the crests of the men's helmets. Now he put his eyes into Daniel's headpiece and peered down at the wide, round craters in the soft earth at the man's feet. The spoor-maker had not left firm impres-

sions in the dirt, but the tracks were definitely those of a large beast. Jhimenex brushed against the lumbering grey image in Daniel's mind.

Dinosaur.

Jhimenex turned the receptor in its socket to watch Dow, a point of white fire moving across the afternoon sky, a plastic and metal anachronism.

A dinosaur, thought Daniel. Anachronism.

: as are we : Jhimenex murmured behind the man's eyes.

Daniel barely noticed the spirit whisper in his head. "What?"

"I didn't say anything," Dow's voice replied.

: Jhimenex? Daniel said, without bothering to speak the word.

it was nothing, Daniel. just a thought :

Daniel squatted under a ginkgo and detachedly finished sealing a sterile tube containing still-living matter which he had been scraping from the tree when he spotted the tracks. Jhimenex could feel the man's excitement. The camera-eye roved from the tracks, which ran parallel to a small, muddy creek for a hundred yards before veering off to the right toward a thick stand of hardwoods,

then to the sky, where Dow was swooping toward Daniel.

Daniel turned the tissue tube over in his gloved hands and tried to contain his excitement by forcing himself to contemplate the ginkgo, the tree which would be dust or oil or, perhaps, an impression in sandstone eons before his birth. The tree which he had just preserved, so that the Paleocene dead might be made to serve the living in his own depleted era. To that future, the tree was dead. And as far as the tree could ever have been concerned, Daniel himself was less than dead, a fleshed-in phantom who had arrived in a gleaming ghost machine to scrape and scoop and suck up samples of soil, water, air, flora and fauna.

Now this. A dinosaur. It could be nothing else. They were supposed to have become extinct five or six million years before—Paleocene time—victims of internecine warfare, destruction of their eggs or young by small mammals, epidemics, sudden temperature changes, mutations in plant life, overcrowding, egg-shell thinning due to hormonal disruptions.

There were so many theories, and all had holes in them.

Dow arrived from the sky, settled gently to the ground and dropped smoothly to one knee to examine the tracks. "Well," he asked after a moment, "what do you think?"

"It's a dinosaur," Daniel said without hesitation. "It has to be."

"Just goes to show that nothing beats on-the-spot investigation," Dow said gleefully. "A few centuries' worth of paleontological theorizing'll go straight down the drain when we turn in tapes of these tracks."

"More funds for the project." Daniel looked thoughtful. "I'd say



these were made by one of the ceratopsians. The horned faces, last of the tribe to go."

"Triceratops. Or one of his cousins, you think? *Styracosaurus*, *Chasmosaurus*, *Monoclonius*. One of those?"

Daniel grinned and shrugged. "Doesn't matter what kind, Dow. It's a dinosaur, and that's what's important."

"Yeah." Dow rose and looked at the elapsed-time meter on his chronometer. "Pity we didn't find these sooner. I'd like to have seen a live dinosaur."

"Sixty-eight minutes left before the jump," Daniel said, checking his own timepiece. "We can squeeze in a dinosaur, surely. These tracks were made less than an hour ago. He can't be too far away."

Dow shook his head. "No can do. Safety margin."

"If we hurry—"

"It's not worth the risk."

"Not worth the risk?" Daniel glared in shocked amazement. Miles away, Jhimenex noticed a small but significant change in the man's metabolic readings. "Dow," Daniel went on, "this is our chance to get a *tissue sample* from a *dinosaur*. It may be the only chance anyone ever gets." He paused, gauging the effect of his words. When he spoke again, he was quieter, but there was a mocking, teasing edge to his voice that took Dow off guard. "The Miocene can wait sixty-eight minutes, man. Why're you in such a hurry?"

Dow frowned into his companion's face, into Jhimenex' camera-eye, then at his chronometer again. "Sixty-five and one-half minutes," he muttered. "Damn it, we're not here to do as we please. Our instructions—"

"Didn't provide for this contingency. I'd classify this as a techni-

cal emergency, and so would BRES. A species that could prove valuable to the project—"

"A *dinosaur*?"

Daniel ignored the interruption. "—is probably right now lumbering off into oblivion. There can't be more than a handful of these creatures left in the whole world here and now. We've got to try."

The other man shrugged. He suddenly looked almost bored, Daniel thought. "Okay," said Dow. "Okay. We'll go have a look. Maybe we'll get lucky." He waved a warning finger at Daniel. "Twenty-five minutes is all."

"Good enough." Daniel flashed a quick, hard smile. The two men flipped down their visors and rose into the purple evening.

The ground below was deeply etched with shadow. The moon, seemingly twice as big as in their own era, loomed heavily at the world's edge. It was almost sunset, and the sky was intensely red in the west. It reminded Daniel of a museum diorama. He imagined a caption: "By the dawn of the Paleocene Period, the great reptiles had passed from the earth, and the Age of Mammals had begun." And then another image: a sagging hulk of muscle and horn moving arthritically into a cold wind, leaving huge pugholes in the ground. Caption: "The Last Dinosaur."

They followed the trail to the edge of the trees. It was hard to guess the area of the thicket, but they could see that it would take far more time than they had to make even a cursory search at treetop level.

"Now where would I go if I were the last dinosaur?" Dow said in a sarcastic stage-murmur.

Daniel glanced over his shoulder at the man suspended against the twilight emptiness. Big-boned, hand-

some, strong Dow. Daniel hated him. He fought down a familiar pang of jealousy and concentrated on the business at hand, mentally projecting a line of tracks through the stand of trees and out the other side.

"Let's look over there," he said, pointing and speeding forward. They searched for a mile to either side of the projected trail. There were no signs that could be seen. Several streams ran through the thicket and around it, and there were several shallow ponds clustered at the northern edge of the trees, but the only animals the two men encountered were strange birds that dived clumsily away, terrified to see their aerial supremacy challenged for the first time since the last of the pterodactyls had splashed down in the warm Kansas sea.

"This is no good," Dow finally said. "Let's go back."

"It could be in there feeding." Daniel eyed Dow desperately, and something of that desperation went down a wire into a fluid-filled sac. "It won't hurt to look a little longer."

"Time's up, Daniel. We can't risk it."

The bastard, Daniel thought, the dirty bastard is doing this just to get to me. As if he hasn't already. "Ten minutes more."

"No. We can't."

Daniel hung in the dusk, feeling frustration and anger rise in him. He shuddered as he abruptly became aware of the tension mounting in Jhimenex. The chronotron was building up power for its leap forward into the Miocene Period. The awareness of the enormous energy surging around and through Jhimenex was an intimacy which Dow did not and could never share. That, at least, was denied him.

Jhimenex—Daniel's cloned self, arrested in the foetal stage and bioengineered for the optimization of temporal control ability—was a greyish pink, slug-like thing with a bulging braincase, a parody of humankind. Yet he was closer to Daniel than a twin brother could have been. He was a capacitor for the immense energy that operated the time machine. He was more and less than Daniel. Chronotron research, once a pasttime for physicists, had finally revealed the secret of controlling time travel: what was needed was a capacitor, something with human abilities—but not too many; something that could think but not be distracted by the senses; some powerfully introspective thing that could reach deep inside itself, grab the thread of fire unreeling from the blinding flash of the creation, and wind up that thread like a powerful spring. Man had always had the secret of time travel locked within himself, but, somehow, it had remained locked there. So there was Jhimenex. A capacitor. A clone. Daniel's child alone, not his and *hers* (oh, how he hated Dow because of her), not hers at all, not even *his*, really, but *himself*.

As Daniel floated in the air beside Dow, he did not know what to do. One journey into a particular past was all that any single object could make. When Jhimenex could no longer hold the chronotron against the inexorable tug of time, the machine would be snapped forward to its next stop. The odds against any other time machine materializing within five thousand years of this particular prehistoric evening were astronomical.

"Five more minutes," Daniel finally grunted. He felt ashamed for having to beg even this little.

"Out of the question," snapped

Dow. "Come on."

"I'm not ready to go," Daniel said, very softly. He began to move across the tops of the trees.

"There'll be other trips," Dow called after him. "Better chronotrons. They'll go back to the Mesozoic and get you your damned precious dinosaurs!"

"Maybe. Maybe not. Go on back to the machine if you won't help me. I'll be along shortly."

: Daniel :

Daniel sped along, eyes peering into shadows beneath him. He said nothing.

: Daniel, Dow's right. Please return with him now :

: damn it, Jhimenex, a dinosaur, an actual, living dinosaur :

: Daniel :

it's right here, right under my nose someplace, and it has to be saved, Jhimenex :

: i understand your feelings, but :

: HOW COULD YOU UNDERSTAND ANYTHING? YOU'RE JUST A DAMNED TIME MACHINE :

Jhimenex slipped out of Daniel's helmet and entered Dow's. The connection was difficult to make and harder still to maintain. Dow and the sentient foetus were not sensitive to each other. : make him come back now, Dow. we may have less time here than we originally thought. i don't know how much longer i will be able to hold the machine here :

Dow started to close the gap, arms outstretched and ready to grapple.

: he's ill, Dow : Cramping spasms were beginning to knot and curl the capacitor's vestigial arms and legs. Jhimenex concentrated on the men. don't hurt him, Dow :

: i'll try not to Dow responded sincerely. "Don't be an idiot!" he yelled as he bore down on Daniel, who

saw him coming and started to go for altitude. "Do you want to die here?"

"I won't die here," Daniel called back hotly. He could hear Dow's heavy breathing in his helmetphones. Then:

"One dinosaur isn't worth this, you idiot!"

That word again, Daniel thought, still climbing. *And, no, one dinosaur isn't worth it, not to you, is it, Dow, is it? You're a good field man, but you have no imagination. No empathy.* He levelled off at seven hundred feet and twisted, banked, turned, blindly now because his eyes were suddenly full of hateful tears.

She must have seen something of worth in Dow, or she wouldn't have asked to cancel her union with Daniel to contract with him. Oh, Dow had been very apologetic, as had she, and they were all good friends, and it had not been a long-term contract anyway, and, besides, Daniel had been busy with his work, much too busy. His work had meant a lot to him, his work being the return of Earth to her ancient beauty, the restoration of the dead land, the clearing away of the filthy mists. Technology, but not before the law of survival of the fittest had again begun to apply itself to human beings. The large animals had been the first to go, then the birds and fish. The creeping things had survived as they always did—rats, ants, cockroaches, the small favored ones, would never die out so long as there were dark, damp places for them to crawl into. There had been some startling mutations, of course, such as the tree frogs that evolved intricate networks of fibre to filter gritty, poisonous air, but Nature's last desperate attempts to save certain species had seldom been successful. And *Homo sapiens* himself had had

trouble adapting to the world he had made. The death rate from polluted air alone hit twelve per cent. It had turned out to be a cruel blessing to the more heavily populated countries—India had gone without famine for a generation and had even managed to accumulate a food surplus—while more technologically advanced countries had been plagued with new moral problems:

Should infants be kept alive by extraordinarily artificial means, or should the less well adapted ones be left to strangle to death as they tried to breathe the air around them?

Would you want your child to grow up in a plastic bag?

Could you afford to keep it alive?

Was it even worth it?

Their child, Daniel's child, her child, had choked to death. There were no more smoke-belching factories, but there was still the thick atmospheric sludge, lingering above the world like some unexorcized ghost, drifting among dead trees and dying cities. It had killed their child, and, shortly afterward, she had cancelled her contract with Daniel to go with Dow, and then. . . .

A rough hand seized Daniel's flight harness. Dow was on him, entwining legs and arms around him in a ghastly parody of love-making. The men wrestled in the air, and inside his plastic egg, contorted with pain, Jhimenex watched through Dow's camera as the universe carouselled crazily. Dow screamed suddenly, a high, sharp sound, like the protesting twang of wrenched metal, and jerked away. His hand was pressed against his side.

Daniel waited in the air, the sharp, self-sterilizing sample-scraper hissing in his fist.

Dow was wide-eyed and unbeliev-

ing. "We're trying to *help* you, you God-damned asshole!"

"Keep away from me," Daniel said through clenched teeth.

"You're sick. You need help. Temporal disorientation—"

"Go back to the machine, Dow."

Daniel : came the whisper from the chronotron. : Daniel, let him help you :

Daniel closed his eyes momentarily, feeling a little of Jhimenex' agony as the time machine played tug-of-war with the future. "Go back," he said to Dow. "Before you bleed to death."

: Daniel, please :

He ignored the voice in his head. "You look guiltier than usual, Dow," he said coldly. Then, oddly, he regretted the remark. He turned, the scraper still humming softly in his hand. The dark world below wheeled and tilted as he banked across the thicket in the direction of the ponds.

"Daniel."

: Daniel :

Daniel deactivated his transceiver.

Come out, little dinosaur, come out, come out, wherever you are. Give me a scraping of your hide, and you'll be reborn millions of years from now, to frolic with elephants and bison on Earth's green fields. We'll clone you, we'll hone you, we'll tone you, we'll raise you up on the third day, a reptilian resurrectee, a lizard Lazarus. Nunc dimittis. Save us, saurian savior, O Mesozoic Messiah. Children of the world, help preserve our vanishing Triceratops.

Daniel cleared the thicket's northern edge and spiraled slowly downward toward the still, bright pools of water. A few minutes passed, and then he dropped, carefully, yet with all the certainty of an owl pouncing upon a mouse, into knee-

deep grass by the edge of one of the ponds. He raised his visor and was silent for a long time, listening to the faint chittering of small mammals among the trees behind him. Mewling cries and pathetic little barks sounded across the pools. There was a single penetrating screech, an almost-human sound that nail-scratched down the blackboard sky. The triumphant songs of the conquerors, the inheritors, the adapted ones.

Daniel switched on his transceiver and gasped as a little of the capacitor's agony came to him. Jhimenex was a silently screaming knot of shriveled flesh and too-soft bone thrashing like a hooked fish.

"I've found it," Daniel said. "By the pools. I've found it."

There was no response from either Jhimenex or Dow. Daniel caught a quick impression, relayed by the capacitor, of the gleaming chronotron swelling in Dow's helmet receptor as the wounded man dropped toward it. Dark Paleocene landscape as the camera swept it jerkily. The words BUREAU FOR THE RESURRECTION OF EXTINCT SPECIES stencilled on the airlock door. Blackness as Dow stumbled into the vehicle.

Daniel blinked away the images. Triceratops lay at the edge of the pond, half on the bank, half in the water. Its grey flank rose and fell feebly. One foreleg jerked spasmodically, mashing the elephantine foot through soft black mud. The enormous head did not move. Daniel let his awed gaze rove over the array of horns, the wicked-looking beak, the backward-flaring bone shield. He stepped closer and caught the beast's powerful smell, a smell of damp earth and decaying vegetation. It was a natural earth

odor, a good smell.

One of Triceratops' dark, filmy eyes was aimed upward at unknown constellations. The nictitating membrane flickered sporadically. A trickle of spittle dripped from the half-open jaws. On the creature's back and sides, patches of hide had fallen off or had been worn away, leaving slimy raw skin exposed, and on the foreleg was a grapefruit-sized lump. Cancer.

Daniel stepped into the water, the scraper ready in his hand. He singled out a patch of raw skin on the flank, midway between the fore- and hindlimbs, and carefully, gently, sliced a strip of tissue from the area. He sealed it in a tube, turned and sloshed back to the bank. Without looking back, he lifted into the dark sky.

He was twenty feet above the ground when the nerves in his back suddenly became white hot. Supernovae blossomed in his skull, and he was beyond thought as his muscles contracted and the world was transfigured into blinding light. The exploding suns seared his optic nerves. A string was pulled in his brain. Memories whipped out like incandescent pearls, and there was a final gasping thought from his other self, a burst of terror and anguish like that of an unborn child coming to its term.

: DANIEL :

The false thunder of a distant implosion rolled across the marsh, eliciting frightened shrieks from the thicket and scattering invisible, screeching birds into the night.

Minutes later, Daniel arrived over the depression where the chronotron had been. He hung in the air, dully envisioning the machine as it skipped forward through time to its next stop.

(cont. on page 46)

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One of the outstanding works in Harlan Ellison's *Again, Dangerous Visions* was a 36,000-word short novel, Richard Lupoff's "With The Bentfin Boomer Boys on Little Old New Alabama." Of it, Ellison said, "It is so audacious and extravagant a story that it becomes one of the three or four really indispensable reasons for doing this book. Frankly, had no other story than this one been written for A, DV—the book would be worth reading." Now Lupoff gives us the followup—

THE BENTFIN BOOMER GIRL COMES THRU

RICHARD A. LUPOFF

Illustrated by Dan Steffan

1. Home from the Stars

'NIFYKIN look outha portole sreely pretty, sreely pretty, lookna Port Upatoi swinging roun thole mudball, thole goodole place, it's maybe not the prettiest place na whole universe but nobody ever said it was, it was home though m that counted frole lot that swat Leander Laptip saw outha portole:

:N'Ala (as her sons wuz oft wont teller):

:N'Alabama (to the slightly more polite of expression):

:Democratic Autonomous United Planet of New Alabama (to be quite utterly ubsrubly formal):

:buthe thingz, here lay on his bunk a-lookin out the window, the portole, the plexipeep one of a good many that lined the length of the battlewagon battered m bruised m bumped m bunkered tho she be, *Leander Perez*,

onetime pride of the fleet of N'Alabama, ort least priderown crew m spacerine detachment, evvy ship worth the power it took to blower tell had better be the pride of the fleet in thize of her own crew, don'chagree?

But as we were just getting somewhere through the ineluctable murk m sure we care a great deal about umbilicle traditions, still let's get ourselves back to our friend (yours, mine, toobeedoobee sure) Leander Laptip whozis *query* m whazis shape *query* m whazza hole purpose of this inquiry *query*

Well hats off m let's give a rousing one/two/three for ole friend Leander Laptip the boyz a N'Alabama Spacerine Cor by damn Foral m not evvy damn gyrene bucko makes that grade nossir you can bet theyz plennya Pee Zeff Sees in the Core not you mention what we uset call Professional Privates in the Ole Core before

they started in withem sillyass modn ideczabout uporout, uporout, *fuck-uporout* summary boys sed when uporout come in.

But ole Port Upatoi, orbiting space station, old goodole donut shape, wagon wheel design, old letterole around the world design, old crazyass space dreamer shipshape notion waythehell back on O'Earth crazyhead Jewrab lookahead freakos said—maker like a ji-mutherfuckin-gantic big wheel and setter a rolling and urine business—:

:that's what they said m theyz right thoroughly.

What's with Leander?

The assholelutely accurate about en the boy ent so spy just today, 'nfact hez pretty unhappy, despite pretty site of take a look therz old Port Upatoi a rolling m a bowlin around N'Ala from light sight t night site m night sight t light site m so bright m down on the ground summer bunnis are playing but:

:Leander Laptip slyininiz bunk looking out the (to be extraneously vernagulous)—window—nce sees a funghodacious gorgeous old sun just hanging there going:

:hot:

:m going:

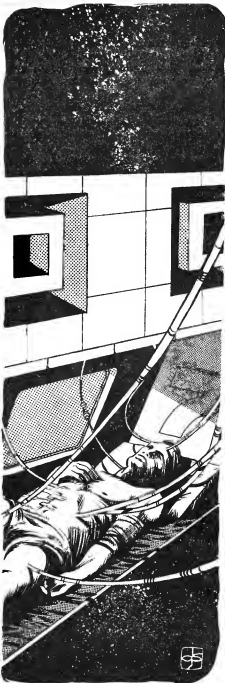
:bright:

:m Port Upatois rolling m N'Alabama underneath spinning m Leander looks down m he sees Leander m he's somewhatly de-one-might-say-at-least-slightly-pressed at what his singular functional remaining eye might espy. What he sees is:

:well what he is sees is:

:well this int pleasant just keep yo patched-m-buttoned on:

:mostly bandages frankly m a good many tubes m wires zoopin into m outa himself, which nobody much would like to see, maybe back on



O'Earth the furgem Jewrabs got geriatric doodaddies like so but out ahere on the independent settled m spunk-assed new planets we hardly have anyboydy around long enough for that kind of tripe.

No'm.

N'Alabama Spacerine Cor fuckin Poral Leander Laptip from Eutaw Town hez a veteran gyrene now, hez bloodied his lance, done his dance, wet his pance m had his chance, hez gone to (meta-damn-phorically speaking) gone to France, found romance and—I say *and earned* iz grance cose hez been, to use the term of the day, holed.

Holed.

Not many casualties cumming from spacewars, you know. No'm, not so many.

Let us say lotsa casualties *occur* but not many come home coz once you *holed* in a space battle, you harley ever recover, one *hole* in yarmer m you know what happens? What happens is:

:zoop:

:assaright, zoop!

Nifya wondering whassa zoop! here's the dope, here's the truth, here's the hope, hope of youth:

:zoop! that's your *air* blow nout, *pfff!* m what's left inside you vacuum suit, well to be excusably graphic about it, you vacuum suit so named for one reason lives down to its name for another, m there *you* somewhat suffering from oxygen starvation for a little while, yass, but true word, no turd, don't worry, only for a little while coz, lovey-dovey, you only gone suffer from oxygen starvation very briefly coz also you depressurizing *rapidly*.

Rapidly.

How rapidly? Well, this rapidly: zoop! Or *pfff!* All the same, all a

shame, not a game.

Very, very few wounded. Dead a passel. Live, no hassel.

But every now m then some flukey lukey comin along, coatching a match-ing, bash but no cash, after a crash, m here lays Corporal Leander Laptip coming home to Eutaw via Port Upatoi, let's give the little feller a great big hand.

He needs it, for sure.

Leander gets thattention of ship's doctors here aboard the gold ole space battlegewagon *Leander Perez*, something there about namesakes worth milkshakes, Leander *L* went to battle the furgem papadocs in the furgem battle of wevvafuckinell, who can tell, rode out there proud m tall a spacerine gunner on board *James O. Eastland* m back he came on board the *Ell Pee* ridin uneasy m unhappy not many others in the ship's sickbay.

But some.

Swarboy, swarboy Leander *L* lizaboard *Leander P* perspicaciously pondering what lizahead of him on little old New Alabama land that he digs, when very shortly now he again sets his singular foot upon her red dust. He is depressed, distressed, and more than a mote impressed with the magnitude of the task that lays ahead of him.

Speaking of which still in orbit there what's still left m functioning of the good ship *Leander Perez* tether-docked to Port Upatoi wheels waltz-ingly out of the planetary shadow, the land terminator still downside N'Alabama's arcly horizon but up ahigh as *Leander P* she be, dawn crumples early and ole Alquane sunny ball smites Leander Laptip smack in his one functionary survivor m Leander blinks m turns away which. . .

. . . considering the assortment of rubber impliments, plastic doodads,

m metallic gimcracks various punched into, parted onto myscrewed onto Leander's remaining anatomy is no mean feat nossir but he does it, he manages to swivel his remaining neck to get that one lubricated orb out of the path of the glare for fair.

Ponwhich it lights up as it lites down upon, surprise, what Leander instamoneously misgrabs as a looking damn glass but in one tick deduces no bajeesus m saint george it is not nossir neither no mirror mimage tall but a other person. Leander would sit up and gasp if he could but he does manage to explice something that sound like this:

—*whuuw*—

:or thereabouts, which brings forth some kind of response, leastly a closed exposed eye goes flitterflatterflutter openshutopen m Leander finds himself lookin eye unto eye with a goddam pitiable mangled bangled dangled *mess* of a former person's remaining viability m Leander finks tombself:

—good krykie fime in shapes bad that poor fucker thissole boyd better cash it in my call it quits—

:but you know that other poor fucker laying there thinking proolly justabout the same thing, wouldntya think, about our poor laddy Leander m there's this kind of, not to be mystical about it or anything fruity like that but would you be willing to grant at least the metaphor if not the fact, *telepathy*.

And they both, you know, after a momentary tension, the two poor bastards what's left of 'em giggle at each t'other.

Leander he looks m he quietly (coz that's the only way he can if at all) laughs.

And that other poor bastard lays there looking at Leander, each othem

with one eye, lots of bandages, tubes, pipes, wires, gadgets, patches, stitches, whevva, they both of them, they just laugh a little.

And then they quiets.

And they gazes.

And they does what you might call in fine old O'Earth traditional showbiz vocab, both um, a little bitta double take. M two eyes blink, one from each shelf where theyz laid m stayed, m they take again what we should call above all a triple take.

M laugh agin.

Coz hez a boy.

M shez a girl.

M that is funny coz they both pretty smarts m they knows about their parts and figure nohow arts gonna fix the mix for *these* hix m you ask, it's natural, don't be no shamers, why the hell they laugh?

Why, to keep from cryne, darling.

M that about all they can do at this life of the stage, sfunny two wrecks alain in pain they gain, you tink, pink, rose, coral, moral, spirits rising somehow m the medics come around at the sound of titters, wheezes, gasps, laffs, guffaws from sick bay.

—Hey—they say today—these two survivors, alivers, hard to believe, still we perceive—

M Leander Laptip in early morning hours a.k.a. dew time gets transferred from *El Perez* awrong riz baymate onna conna thissole battlegwagon's tale is draggin' m shain't go make it down to the surface ulittle o Labamma she'd nemmake it, she'd crack up, smack up, back up long before reaching shore so:

:so *Leander Perez* erstwhile pride of the fleet (along with a couple others such as the big ole momma ship *Lurleen McQueen* as never made it back from thole battle at all) she go stain drydock as it were, norbit forry pairs

even tho N'Alabamian battlewagons customarily rise and return to and from the surface of that there ole little planet such as at or near the ole dear never fear Fort Sealy Mae, but not now.

Leander Laptip finds what's left of himself transported to that old orbiting loop, that interplanetary universal detachment, Port Upatoi, m in sick bay *there* while they tryne patch up what's left so he can return to a somewhat normal life back on the surface of the land that he loves a loyal son of N'Ala m since surviving wounded of space battles—

—you don't know about Leander's space battle? Owe buoy, owe buoy, pure white surn N'Alabamian spacerines versus stinkin' papadoes out waythehell beyond some ole constel fuckin lation whichie won twitchie won addano someplace out in space somewheer neer thole Serpent's Face Yirrkalla wizziz six bright m sparklies, never you treble your bass about it, don't tremble who won, who lost, leave that for:

Official Military Historians of a Later Period

period

:for you, dear ole palsy, just consider that anybody who came away from the mess in one piece still functioning somewhat normalmente is a winna m anybody dragged away in chunks by the graves registration servus is a cipher which leaves as losers only such unfortunate survivors as our dear associate Leander Laptip of Eutaw New Alabama and:

:here's Leander in sick bay aboard Port Upatoi being interviewed by some good old medic m the medic is takin a what they call medical history of Leander [only bout the seven zillionth one he's (get yo' gee hard baby) gin since been listed in the

N'Alabama spacerine corpse way back awhen] m the medics they already bin doon a good job on Leander, you kin believe that not on my say but because *he* sez, first chancty gets twixt—evahad measles—m—evahad penny ciders, no nemmine thaparts gone now anyhow—Leander he sez:

:—Hey you old medic boy, whevva happena that lil ole gal was alayin in sick bay on bo *Leander Perez* wimme?—:

:na medic sez back . . . well, wait a tock m less sea what matters on four thole medic tells Leander, did you guess, do you win the pries? Yes? Right! Leander asked at all, that's what's miraculous, coz that boy couldn't hardly function tall last time we laid eyes on him, right? M now hez askin questions.

Good work, N'Alabamian medical technology!

But we distress.

Lookee he: Leander Laptip he sez—Whevva happena that lil old gal was alayin in sick bay wimme?—

Ole boy medic he don't know, or he sez so, anyhow, Leander he feels pretty lonesome, pretty unhappy, but they work that boy over, gravity's light up here in Port Upatoi, sick bay here not very crowded, staff moderately adequate to supernumerations, they fix him up with a bunch of physiotherapeutic procedures like warm baths, cool baths, dumbbels, exercisers, whatever they haven to hap around, m:

:one fine day (as such things are measured in space where stuff like that can be pretty much arbitrary if you want 'em to be) they take Leander down to the gymnasium m hitch him up onto some parallel bars, which is no easy proposition considering as there isn't a hell of a lot of him left to hitch onto those bars, bees got a

whole arman hand and another chunk of one m parva torso so they get him hangin up there m:

:well, toobee doobee butterly frank it isn't that Leander's actually and immediately in acutely intolerable pain, again, he ain,

(they keep some fat ole molecules circulatin in his blood all the time, keeps that from happening)

but more, well, a sort of generalized malaise m discomfort, a sense that all ain't exactly right with him (which of course is quite the case) m he can't see too much of hisself even wiz one eye that he has left, but he's a game lil fella Leanders, so he letsem hitch him up there on the parallels m he starts what they call in medijarg, generalized preprosthetic musculaturial conditioning, or, as it's known familiarly to its friends:

"Toughening Up What's Left So We Can Hang On Hardware"

:m after a couple three eternities of unpleasantness Leander is hoisted back down offen them parallels m dropped in a little gadget not a hole different from a shopping cart same as good wives use down in Echola, Gasque, Cozheath, Suggsville Center &cet knee gets a free trundle back to zward, which is a private room full of nitrogenic life support systems m all like that.

Leander comes out twice a day (so to say) for sessions the likes of that, minbee tween there ain't a hell of a lot frim to do, being incapable in his present condition to swim, play free fall volley ball, whatever, but he does have his brain (or that major portion which do remain) soz to keep him occupied, satisfied, gratified m stratified the kindly crew, staff m therapists of the sick bay m medical rehabilitation station of Port Upatoi make available to Leander their own cultural mate-

rials.

Some of which he has a trifle of trouble with handling the physical aspects of, such as turning pages m pushing buttons but modern prosthetic technology works wonders, right?

Startin wif a threevee holoed tape of N'Alabama's most famous and admired night club entertainer, eggs arctic danseuse, gooseloose, Miss Merriass Markham, dooner famous patriotic esssanem act, live as seen in the finest establishments of Letohatchie m the likes:

:Miss Merriass wearn underneath her ole style surnbell friffles mere trifles, rubbery briefs featuring strategically placed cutouts here and there, m Miss Merriass first threatened wivva lil misceginaceous rape then whipping out her whip m given that yukkypukkysukky thing What Four.

Of alla this, nun is noo, nun is noo to Leander Laptip who bin raisen fine old N'Ala traditions, budda boy looks at it all with suitable admiration, aesthetic appreciation as it was, m one might even say, speculating as that's all one can do under the peculiar circumstances involved, as how Leander for sure would, how can we place this peckerously decorously, well:

:He'd get a rise out of Miss Merriass all right if he had any rise left to get out of her:

:(if our meaning is taken accurately).

Oleander, he sighs over no rise, the reel ends anyhow as the good spirit decreed long ago they must, m Leander turns his head wondering what he's going to do next for diversion, it not being meal time right now (he has a little problem with meals too, as you might have figured out all on your own, but it's better than nothing, or at least so the medics keep

on telling Leander m being a good gyrene he tries to believe em).

He gets a fukbuk next: lossa nice pictures, no dialogue to distract the "reader" fromz vicarious fantasies, lozza nicetuff, ultra closeups, can you imagine a camera peeping right up there inside the vulva, implanted, vattery osperated, waiting for the arrival of Lord Glans, here he comes m there he goes m here he comes m there he goes m this transpires for a while, little cutaways nown then to external closeups suitable for immediate analysis m hack inside *where* here come d eflood, all over the lens but what the hell that proves this is for real, right?

M Leander he turns the pages with his hand, wishing there was something else he could do with it, m his one eye kind of waters up but he's a brave gyrene m next thing he knows here come the medics m the shopping cart m he's carted off, back to generalized preprosthetic muscularial conditioning, but just as hez getting wheeled in he spies someone else ahanging on the parallels getting lifted down m stuck in a cart not a holot different from his own m he shouts (as best he can):

—Hey!—

m thuthamutha turns her head (as best she can) m Leander yells:

—Hey get in touch!—

Too much! Personal contact and such, these two it looks like might swell be soul mates (they can hardly be any other kind at this game of the stage, now can they?) m the good ole medics roll that there lil ole gal away (or what's left of her) m Leander m'z chief handler they go through a little bit of dialogue like this:

—Hey, that was my friend—

—Mmph—

—I wanna talk tur—

—Mmph—

—She nose weartsat—

—Mmph—

—Gah damt, I won't cooperate till you answer me!—

—Mmph?—

—When can I talk to her?—

—You wanner seeya like this?—

—Mmph—

—Tell ya what—

—Mmph—

—You get set, get yer prosthes implanted, get yer shit together—

—Mmph—

—Then we'll get the tuvya together—

—Lemme at them parallels—

2. Artists in their Studio

NOW THAT, now that's what we call, what we call motor—no, *moti*—yes—*vation*. Leander he giziz awl, giziz awl, works with what he got, not so very much to be sure but what the hell, it leaves a viable organism providing certain assistance is provided, a few little things.

But he's got his brain (well, most of it) niz heart niz lungs ninough assorted other internal doohickies as he can take in such stuff as mashed much at one end end get nourishment out of it before he deposits mashed mush again at the other. And let's be frankly brutal about it, luv, isn't that what it's all about?

No?

You try doing without that for a while. Pretty soon you won't talk too much about art, soul, love, truth, justice and the New Alabamian Way of Liphe.

First comes nourishment. Mush in, mush out, or MIMO as the computer heaux call it.

Leander has a will to live, mostly motivated by that charming little dar-

ling he shared sickbayspace with back on board the *Perez*, not that hez thought it all the way through exactly or even approximately. No, it's more that hez got this kind of buried contact with reality sommer adeep in his brain (fortunately this lies in the portion Leander still has—without it, he'd be in even worse trouble than he is, or even dead, which of course would be less).

He figras, he can right about now:

:die:

:hermitize:

:gorgonize:

:psychotize:

:narcotize:

:or maybe just plain realize the fact that hez agonna have a hard time forming what is generally referred to as a Lasting and Significant Relationship with anybody.

Hmm. Except:

:for that pretty little blonde (or redhead or brunette or whatever she might happen to turn out to be) from sickbay. And since poor oleander doesn't know her name rank or serial number no less any of the, *ahem*, more intimate details regarding this particular lady (or remnants thereof) and hez only gonna find out through the courtesy of the New Alabamian Spacerine Corps, what's he going to do?

Think about it, darling.

Leander is nobody's dummy. Or at least he wasn't until he got his vocal apparatus blown halfway to hell & damnation by the furgem papadocs in the Battle of Wurverthehellitwas, m he wants to get back into shape, hoping all the while that his little apple sorce is doing the same (not to keep the reader in suspense, she is).

Thus, rest assured pal, Leander does all the exercises the Medical Corpse wanzimta, pullups (with only

one hand, that's pretty demanding, but with so little weight left, and in orbit, it's rilleasy), pushups, sitdowns, stump lifts, &c.

Much &c.

The ole little blonde is doing the same.

Finally Leander gets ishered his prosthies. Shall we peruse the list in detail? Shee-it, naw. Ya know, part of it is mostly just dull and part of it is, frankly speaking ole pal, kind uh well, hevya had a meal lately? Just in case you had, you know, you'd rilly rather not hear.

Bleevit, bleevit, you'd rilly rather not hear.

Anywa, from arrfisl eyeball to titanium toenails, those old medics get are buoy Leander hammered back into shape, m put him through a pretty rigorous training program, learning all ovagain t sit, walk, stand, lie, rise, trot, drink, cut, eat, nazillion others.

Even t talk. In fact, especially t talk. Not too much vocal apprats left-toom, they gim a whole buncha internal falsies, no function unnoticed, but learning tyuse all the stuff all over again isn't exactly child's play, norz Leander exactly a child, all of which adds up to some odd numbers.

We do not mean one, three, five, seven . . . ninety nine, et cetera, neither, buster, so can the wisecracks before we pay you a little unexpected visit one night.

Now the big day comes. Really. You can place your full trust in the honesty of the narrator.

The medics usher Leander into a waiting shuttle that's docked to thor-biting Port Upatoi that glints like a teensie tinesee mincher peepsight-cum-crosshairs in the morning and evening light of Alquane as she (Port Upatoi, not the star) zips throor orbit

in the sky of the Independent Autonomous Sovereign Self-Governing zederazedera New Alabama.

Alla jointser noomagically sealed so Leander hedo neno spacesuit nor dooz escorts, proud m self-esteemin representatives of the most advanced rehabilitation facility on in under (or in the present case, orbiting) the I., A., S., S-g'ing., blablabla.

Leander seats himself (unassisted, to the sighing relief of numerous physicians, technicians, politicians, &c) na combination e.z. chairn flitecouch, makes some small talk wiz erstwhile handlers while awaitin tsee what's going to happen next. Sound something like this:

- Wal—
- Hem-a-ham, ah, yep—
- Sertneez bin, un—
- Yeh, yeh, fishoo—
- Yeh, fishoo—
- Shoo—

Don't you got thinking it gointa go on like that indefinably, mind, jest fawhile, faliwhile, you know, plite small talk zall tis, niffit sounds somehow, ahm, arr, lacking in substance ur something, well, take a good listen next time *you* find yourself in such circumstances of some similar sort.

File lee, everybody shakes hams, everyone pressing flesh to, ah, whatever, and the medics retire leaving our boy sitting there thinking aboutiz boyhood in Eutaw Town & spacerine bootcamp at Fort Sealy Mae & wild liberteze in Letohatchie & howt felt going into space the first time upside the *James O. Eastland* & getting riptshreds by the furgem papadocs & recovering upside the *Leander Perez* (not hardly nobody does that) & meeting that sweet lil thing jes alaying there in *Perez's* sickbay & thinkin about what she mussa kept ahid un-

derneath ther uniform back when she had it(

her uniform, that is, but cumta think on it, what she kept his unneath it too

)alla which has our favorite lad just-about into a state of fugue not tsae farg, wenny hirza couple primarily clanks nee looks up wix ize:

:one organic one electronic that are:

:mee seze a vision just astandin there, just astandin there.

Oh, ah, you *want* teer *this* description, you really truly do & this is not no gag no way, no.

She's oh, thissl take your halitosis rat away just teer it, she's:

:tall:

:slim:

:blonde (yeh, Leander baby, right, f that'ser natural color):

:nshe smiles a smile at Leander, he just looks attr m on some levluther hez thinking tomb self thas just the nicest smile hez ever scene nee wonders how much of its podgin m how much of its medicsgin m then, Leander beene a normal red-blooded Eutaw Town type N'Alabama stud

with a normal or roughly so hormone balance in his rh-negative as provided until recently bize goodgin gonads m more recently even than that by some gummit ussue prosthees (those medics are *thorough*!) Leander does what any normal (or prosthetically assisted) red-blooded N'Alabamian beau wuddo, he casually letsiz eyes slide a mite downward in their tracks,

the godgin one goes () that is to say, silently, rotating vertically nit-socket m in perfect (or roughly so not to stretch a point all out of line):

:the medicgin one goes (*click-bzzt-click*) but so discreetly as nobody's agonna head *that* septin our boy himself m *he* is surely not gonna tell, nee

sees that lady has got a most tasty lil shape honor cominout *here*, cominout *here* (you get the points, surely, to violate none of the howitzers of good taste) m

goinback in in the middle & out-again at them delightful, delicious, delectable, delovely hips which our boy anotes athrough thetair lil gal's spacerine standard trousuzsegue most charmingly into a paira shapely gams m Leander he thinks just one thought at the moment, could that thar gal but hear his mental motions sheed listen in on this:

—How much—hez wondrin—of thetair gal is *gal* m how mucher's tubes m wires m plastoghermal pseudodermal pseudonormal anti-spermal & cetera & so on & as follows—

But of course he doesn't say that m she doesn't hear it, instead he sez most politely:

—Ah, howdydo—arisin courteously fromz seat he continues—ny name is Corporal Leander Laptip N'A Spacerine Corpse late of the biggole bapper *Jimmi O. Eastland*—

Twitch she sez—mfashoe yaw won y'sef a biggo bentfin boomer gin the furgem papadoes Corpy—

Ncc sez, lookin (*click-bzzt-click*) addiz freshpankin collar m seenit there a winking back adam—Baddam, ma'am, that's a zackly what she am, fyoo heard some rumor that's a bentfin boomer—

Nshesez—Well addi clair, I see it there. I'd do my share t'hep enjoy the cupnee bentfin boomer boy—

He grins (*click-bzzt-click*) m takes her ham (*clank-ichirr-chonk*) m sezeez honored. —Myore?—he axeser politely.

—Wam Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell from Salitpa, you silly, you know me, don't you memmah back theyn sick bay?—

Nleander, been the plite devil he is, he sez—I da never knowja—nee sits again m draws Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell down wim.

They both strapped in, Leander m the real attractive blonde, m engaged themselves in increasingly large small talk so's when their shuttle pulled its snorkelouten Port Upatoi they dinneven take note, they just kept on exchanging the contents of storage all the while.

Mizzy Lizzy from Salitpa shez no comfortrooper, N'Alabamian spacerines down gowin for that kinda stuff, ole General in charge of the Core he done laid him down the lore, he sed to the follin general effect:

—Makes a man rough & mean, tough & lean, every morn exfiln horny, every nighty wansa fight—

or thereabouts, quote, thoughts of Colonel General Pissfire P. Pallbox, Commandant, meanest ass old bastard ever drew breath of airna spacesuit. Oh, but his men loved him, that's the kind they allus do, right? Sure they do.

But crikey, mikey, Colonel General Pissfire P. Pallbox needzima secretary no? Ajjerancer okay, we say, but a wee tiny toucha the distaff staff helps a gyrene keepiz memory keen sozy nosy ain't just up here for a space cruise. Sozy nosy got a mission tonight, nenemy tflight, keepmup-tight.

Whooee! That little piece of tail that Mizzy Lizzy was for certain Colonel General Pissfire P. Pallbox's secretary, right. Anything extracurricular in particular ainobody's business but hers, ist?

And Colonel General Pissfire P. Pallbox's, corse.

And now, strangely enough, sgettin the Spacerine Corporal Leander Laptip's too. Well, well.

We don't gonna get ahunkup on one wee tiny cruise, though, one would hope. Nope. Mizzy Lizzy tells Leander awboulder lily grillhoodn Salitpa, a bucolic rural community as paired to hustly bustly Eutaw Town (proud home of Leander Laptip, you will for certian recall).

Awboud trottinrouner daddy's ole farm a playin in the meadows (watch out you don't step in the cowpat, honeybunch—oh damn ya did) heppiner main in the kitchen (gowdathere babe he come yole pap—oh damn too late) walkner hownz (gadanzat bitch in heat awlatime?) & like that.

Growinupn gowinschool, holdin ahands with the beaufum the next farm (gardamn Raffie gitcho hand offen my ass or aggonna kick you na bawcs), splornin discoverin behind the school & all like that.

—Raffie?—sez Leander.

—Yow Raffie Slocomb—sez Mizzy Lizzy.

—Fout, fout!—spluts Leander (*whir-bzzt-whir*)—Raffie Slocomb?—

—Yow wusmatrya, Leander, shoe said Raffie Slocomb, facs Raffie Slocomb got my cherrie backz school one Saddy—in she makina smile lakta break your heart you could see it, oh, her eyes they get kinda moist in distant looknanner mouth it goes up at thedges like a smilesposeter butter lips quiver summit (*kchk-sppp-kchk*).

—Wewwo wewwo—comments Leander (*mmm-zzz-mmm*)—Raffie he was a goodo buddiaminc upboard *Jimmie O.* ownie bought it wifurgem papadocs Raffie's all done.

—Urk, wah, ooo—Mizzy Lizzy reacts (*zzzz*) a dropa water else lube oil pops outner eye m hangs hobblinin freefall there upboard the shuffle—that bastard he got my cherry—she reiterates—himn Andrew Lawson m Albert Watters m Tommy Mannerin

m Clarissa Clemson m—bushez cut off as the shuttle whomps interer skid row m slithers m sloops m slaps ginthe landing dock at the spaceport neest Letohatchie Town, Letohatchie Township, Democratic Autonomous Planet of New Alabama or whatever.

Leander Laptip m Mizzy Lizzy Cadhell get checked over by planet-side medics m come out with cleans bills of health m certificates of mechanical operation respectfully both, running through various m sundy tess, stuff like:

—Can yisse wumdoon?—

—Yasr—

—Can yiddoot?—

—Shoe—

—M hazzit feel?—

—Hozzit what?—

—Feel—

—Mm (*whir-clank-whir*)—

M the grounders gim some nice clean new fresh spotless unwrinkly unspecked well-fitted new New Alabama Spacerine Corpse duds Leander looks proudly at his bentfin boomer glittern m gleamin onz lapel m at his skin by now slightly space-speckled nattiz prosthies they nicely space-speckled too sozy cnardly tell the diff, good-o.

Mizzy Lizzy comin outenerown dressy room, Leander sees she's all adolled up in official govish lady spacerine eveny gown cut sexy rad-downer *heah* he spresses a giggle thinkna droppina nice cube down the front tweener cuties, Leander can't (at this game of the stage) even spot the lines wherer organic skin lees offner govish prosthie starts, wunnid be a lafify dropped a nice cube tweener cuties m she cooneen feel it, wow!

He also notices futher first time at she's a sarnt! Mexonly a corporal, rember, what a sweetycuntshe's, not even never to pull no rank onm nor

never eenta mention it.

More to point, she gots *three* bentfin boomers a sprackin m a packin on the bodice uvver gown. *Three*. Leander is, to put it in a word, impressed.

In fucking pressed.

—Wah, Mizzy Lizzy—he sez.

—You proo, Leander?—she asks, light & moistrously lak a little town (Salitpa) virginer summin.

—Oowee!—zall Leander can say, but that shall suffice.

Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell she beena sarnt summidy tole her summin theynt tole Leander (poo beau, poo beau) Mizzy Lizzy she takesim bahan m, leadzim through a door, he blinks, it's the first time hez seen daylight on planetside in, wowee, months, months.

Ole Alquane zashinina weigh up in N'Alabama's sky, bright m round, the sky's clearn sparkly, jussa couple teensy fleensy lil clouds a puffin m a driftin jussa make it all the pretties.

Old Leander he fines bothiz eyes gettin some wettin, one with a tear dropper two, one with a couple draps lube oil.

Leander finds himself standing side aside with Mizzy Lizzy, where izzy, up someplace on a reviewn stand, na middlabuncha digitaries, sun shining, flags flapping, a mob of Letohatchie Township's finest loafers, dregs, civil servers, unemployables, infants, — setterers sprawlina round, plane grabass, smokin fine back country plug cut, chawin shag, snikkin a swig nownagin at, some specious looking brown bags (*plus ca change*, pal), noff somewhere ta side a brass bam big-ginsta play.

Why, it makes Leander's chest swell positively with pride.

Rzzztlr, bzzt-zzzpzzzptzrb, tltzzzR.

Thooz tears (m lube oil) Leander

sees some bigshot smalltime politico big bo ho-ho heading for the microphone, some flunky bunky gets there first m introducim:

—Lazy gennim himbil mare Milburn Mitchum!—

Hombil mare Milburn Mitchum gabzy mikc m makes a wee bitty speech owe bout N'Alabama cares fruworn, returning military heroes gomby rehabilitated, reasorked inder snivilian economy, wall lum, wall prow, wall gim estythim we can. & like that.

Some smalltime bigshot military lionchoboho Captain Kal Koberly fm Fort Sealy Mae he nestakes microphone m sain evy same as Milburn Mitchum he did, only wiproper military manner stepolitical bombast masses Mizzy Lizzy tsaya worder too.

—Aprouta serve—Mizzy Lizzy sez (*rr-bzz-rr*) m a few similarly suitables m asses Leander to do the same.

He does.

They go back inside flowered by cheers m claps, brass band a bammin m a whammin away in the day just soze they does, doors close.

Inside (wah, wah, theyn Letohatchie City Hall) mare Milburn Mitchum leesem ta fancy bankitable white linen cloth dazmlin spazzlin silly where, transchina lucentware, glittin crystal.

Steak & taters for Milburn, Kal Koberly mother invited digitaries, malshed mush uccorse for guessov honor. Fine wine frall, frall, frall.

Yum.

Afterwards they geddownta business, serious business, you know, what a returning verraneeds is not glory nor sympathy but a job, noppportunity to hold his [her] head up high, earn a living, bring home a check, pay his [her] bills as an honest m productive citizen, — like that, m

Letohatchie proud city fathers have set up interviews.

Leander Laptip m Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell by now such goobuddies they decide to do the vue together.

Firstups a lovely largeish lady summatt fleshy yella curls big red lips, generously curved, perfumed so ya can smell a comin couple rooms off, very shy & demure & proper, she flinger business card on the table but done count on anybody's literacy & launches right into selfintro:

—Darlins war heroes I want to take care of you, come on m work in my pussy parlor, short hours good wages call me boss mnames Piggy Peggy, PPPP's the best pussy parlor this siden Sugssville Center, allatop johns come tmplace, most um like girls, my my Mizzy Lizzy you'll do just fine you'll be a favorite, you'll draw top john, they'll love you

—Oh and three bentfin boomers, why allamy bentfin boomer boys cominafamina Fort Sealy Mae theloveya, I've never had a bentfin boomer girlafore, oh, oh, and yerfriender, yerfriender whatchacalled, beau?—

—Uh, Leander Laptip ma'am fum Eutaw Town—

—Waffine waffine you know this modrun ear theysa customer frevy service m a service frevy customer, some our johns like ahaha fambily groups, ahaha, youn Mizzy Lizzy, why Lanny & Lizzy cubbe very big, very, nodamenchen some johns might just love to get on with a bentfin boomer boy like you, my my, a bentfin boomer boy & girl jistlike that, my my my—

But Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell willeander folliner head she's a smartn (three bentfin boomers m still *alive*, albeit somet reduced, can't be no dumbbe) Mizzy Lizzy zes:—I thanky nall

thinky ont, thanky Piggy noutshego, noutshego & gone.

3. Celebrities in the Streets

THEY TURNED ASIDE every offer they got, which was, to be very precise about it, not rilly a hell of a lot, but some, some, including an offer of a temporary booking as part of the spectacular nightclub act of Miss Merriass Markham, biggest thing on the Leto—Gasque—Echola circuit (all right, not quite the biggest, but damn good, pal, damn good).

Leander was pretty big to take that-un, you can bet, after beena fan of Miss Merriass's for a long time, why Merriass's pix was about the biggest things on the whole damn Spacerine detachment circuit, certainly up-boarda the *Jimmie O. Eastland* m others, zwelz the corridors m chambers of Port Upatoi.

You might say, in fact, that the one place where Colonel General Pissfire P. Pallbox agreed widz immediate superior Admiral Yancy Moorman was on the marvy merits of Miss Markham. Wow, they coont even agree on whether or not the fleet otto carry lady leatherasses, we know Pissfire's opinion, Admiral Moorman's been quite the opposite, i.e., Pissfire he preaches *No* m practices *Yes*, Yancy he preaches *Yes* m practices *No*.

Well it's odd but soza lotsa crap.

Where Lanny & Lizzy (it do have a ring noudon't it?) wind up after a final municipal dinner m mustering out ceremony, they wearn civvies now but allowed by military dispensation to display their four (cumulative, heheh) bentfin boomers on their civvies, is takena tour courtesy bigho seegar-chompin whiskey-sippin red-faced, gland-hand faller Cornelius Balto Jenkin ahoom you've never

even *heard* before well don't let it get you down neither had Leander Laptip nor Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell until just a little while ago when C. Balto (as he pufferediz friends to call him, which ista say mought near everyone septin any furgem papadocs or jewrals he might happen to encounter, which he never having had the pleasure in his entire New Alabamian life made for a slightly hypothetical atmosphere hovering over the whole matter).

C. Balto claimed title to the Manglin Doctorship of the N'Alabama Multimedia Cultural Combine, a large organization whose main offices and production felicities were centered in the lovely N'Alabama town of Coxheath, a delightfully breezy community located midst a glop of shimmering lakes, sinmering swamps and the like.

Fat C. Balto offerm Leander Laptip wouniz fat green stogies—Yomine fee menfolks smoks Mizzy Lizzy?—(every inch a genaman that C. Balto) & Mizzy Lizzy she sez gritahed menfolks m she graciously accepts C. Balto's offra glass of branny m heen Leander m Mizzy Lizzy discuss what hizzole Combine, what NAMCC as its friends' call it, hasta offer two hardworking m heroic wounded war veterans home from batterin the badole papadocs.

—Wawee zintevvethin, evvethin—C. Balto say around his fat green stogie. —You namer, we've doner. Evvethin. Fukbux, vidpix, live shows fitha boys away fmome, evvething.—

Mizzy Lizzy, she sips slowly adder branny, not wholly certain how mucher how fast she can absorb alcool under her recent circumstances. She listens, she watches Leander listen, m aftra while she axes a question or several.

—Whatsit pay?—

C. Balto Jenkin names a number that makes Leander Laptip trine whistle out loud (discover he hasn't relearned to do that and will have to) m Mizzy Lizzy's pretty impressed herself but she conceals things a bit betterner partner, m she axes:

—Fur what, C. Balto, fur what?—

—What you two gumbbe my new stars, you gumbbe stars!— sez C. Balto Jenkin, sippina branny zizown.

—Rat, rat—sez Mizzy Lizzy—but you din answer my questry, C. Balto, hey— Nafter all, shez accustomed to dealing w Colonel General Pissfire P. Pallbox in m ouda the bag, Admiral Yancy Moorman m dlike, even though she was a mere sarnt (mere, hah!), she knows howdadeal with biggies m toughies m any possible comboe the two.

—What Fur, C. Balto, you go giss so much loot, fur what?—

—Em, em, em—C. Balto Jenkin delays, rolliniz eyes to the skies for disguise—well I gotta try you two out, see where your talents lie, maybe shoot some stills for starts, do a little bukato, work up, let out a vidpikrtoo, whine up with a superglorious fatbulious pussynal planterary tour, now howzat soundaya Mizzy Lizzy, howzat soundaya Leander beau?—

Oh, that C. Balto, he cud charm the skin off a banana, he could. Don't ya think so? Hey, wait a minute, put that hack on for now.

Mizzy Lizzy looka Leander Laptip m v. versa, they confer in silence m secrecy fa few seconds, Leander he merges fm the conference me sez:

—Misra Jenkin—

—C. Balto, son, I want all my friends tcall me C. Balto—Cornelisu B. Jenkin (haha!) interjects.

—Rat, rat, C. Balto. Oak anna hay.

Mizzy Lizzy nme wed liketa bop-paroppa over t Gasque, see what-chagot they, look over things, meet you peopou, so to speak, and like that.—

—Fair enough!—exclaims that ole capitalist C.B. Jenkin, pounding Leander on the shoulder.

(clank!)

So off by smalltime commercial airline, C. Balto Jenkin, Leander Laptip m Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell, Mizzy Lizzy bypassing a potential projected visit toor ole hometowna Salitpa. The plane is slightly olan rickety, shakes m trembles summat, makes Leander slightly nauseous, Mizzy Lizzy does a bit better, C. Balto (well of *course* you are numbered among the Manglin Doctor's close friends, pal):

:just has a fynole time, chompininswirlin addiz fat green stogies, swiggginat branny or whevver, chummin upta Mizzy Lizzy, trina cheerp Leander, whichee succeeds at reassembly well.

Leander thinks nownena summiz buddies din maygit back fum the Battle of Whevvathehellitwas, wonders a bit sometimes what he gom doomsef, he don't hurt much sept nownenabit, fact he don't feel much anyhow, umm, pudthis weigh:

:allem prosthies got sensors m Leander kin get readouts, hedoween gotta check no instrumentsr nothing, tsall wired direct intwiz central nervousystem (or seeyeness as its friends call it) m he can *tell* whether, oh, frinstance, the prosthy toes onniz left foot are line curled or straight, see, wout havvena take offiz shoon *look* at the liffuckers, hez got a dreck line, toes tooz brain, sozy *knows*.

But would you call that *feeling*?

Maybe not.

Pruction felicities of NAMCC in Coxheath, N'Alabama leave hardly

nothin to be desires, jis setchasef ontawhevva yawant, kay, m they gotch. C. Balto Jenkin taken Leandern Mizzy Lizzy na friendly lil tourtha place, drinkna cuppa first, then overlook a quick displayatha company's products, alltime bestsellers, classics, latest releases, et and also cetera.

Libbila lunch na Combine cafeteria, C. Balto woofs downa coupla stuffed pokers, ersa corn, coupla fissfulla cornbread, glassa branny wiz meal—Ah, keeps thole juices flown—he sez twiz gezz) lustly murals srounningem:

:straight stuff on one wall:

:biv pederasty long another:

:smoralism behind the service line, summody's sensa funnies, har:

:back wall gotsum, ah, the tecklecke word been besiality:

:noverhet the crowning display, first-rate essenemm.

Eheul!—sez Leander, or summon lack that. —Eheu!—

Conversation flags summat doorn lunch but C. Balto keeps the branny frown m afterwards provides fat green stogies frimsefn Leander(—You domind, Mizzy Lizzy?— —Course no— —& cet—)

Allat Mizzy Lizzy m Leander Laptip had doorn *they* meal was mashed mush uccorse. Nabitta branny uccorse.

After C. Balto sez—Now mugood frenz habbada lil screen test, a mere formality uccorse, know you'll do just fine, down the line, palza mine, that be okee?—

Leander zaps a quick looka Mizzy Lizzy, Mizzy Lizzy gizzya hoschmosch sublintenal nod (*crick-crick-crick*) nee sez—Shoe!—

C. Balto leezem inna the taping studio fra vidpik (—Stilz later—he sez, pattin Mizzy Lizzy onna rumptytumpy) (*clonk-clonkly-clonk*). —Heezit—C. Balto sezez they sloof

thoo a heavy padded soundproofing door.

—Mizzy Lizzy, Leander—C. Balto exhales—awanya meet my top viddy cameraman, hill tapeyustoday, say hloda Specs.—

Specs he comes outa messa heavy cables m crap, shaken handz wizzy Mizzy Lizzy m Leander Laptip, sane—Happy tmeecher— gessa funny look as they shake (*skrk-skrk-skrk*) m (*bzzt-bzzt-bzzt*) m dresses mseftaz Manglin Doctor:

—Haya mizzuz, haya pappinlow?—

—Mizzuz fine, hain't seed pappinlow lately, hez up ta leto, yinno, big meetinzallatime—

—Ape, ape, ats a rat—zez Specs. Turnin backtaz gess—Yinno C. Balto's pappinlow's Senator Velly fum Tal-ladega—

—Nodino at—zez Leander.

—Shoe hess w gummit contracks, asso shoe—zez Specs.

—Awah, allevayo folks tyer work now, ad lakka stay hee buggommy own work yinno. Specs, you be nasta my frez he, hey? Yedit uppa cuppa tapes m senem toomey, hoke?—

Specs he sez shoe, C. Balto Jenkin he takeniz leaf m Specs he turns ta Leander m Mizzy Lizzy me sez—Masswell get undressed, thow yduds in the corner, we're mighty informal around heeh.—

He busies himself wiz lights nequipment, checkin this meter m that par line m this gadget m that doohickey.

Leander Laptip m Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell zonny other side of the room, they look neach other, look at Specs hez busy wiz gear coont care less what theyz upta, look back addy chootherm Leander he blushes m Mizzy Lizzy starts carefully undooner civvies.

Leander startsa turniz back, Mizzy

Lizzy laughs not altogether kindly, so Leander, his organic parts blushin red (the prosthy parts do work well, shoe, but not *that* well) m he watcheser taking offer boots m tatpans, shirt m now shez jusner to be discreet undies m she looks over at Leander m sez—Mmm?—

Nee realizes as hez still fully to use thelegant term clothed swee starts undoonizown civvies, kicks offiz shoes (that is *good* prosthesis, you kin do that, pal, else just trite some time), rolls downy zokz, pullsi zkirt ovrided m now comes a minor moment of truce.

Leander looks at Specs, detex eeztil messin wiqwik mint, coon care less about Leandern Mizzy, Leander looks at Mizzy Lizzy, sees she's down tour skivvies, notices somewhat twizzzone surprise that wily admired Mizzy Lizzy's bonkers :slyly onner small side, ridin keeping widder gemorail tall slim construction) daddy don't *feel* a fing.

Mizzy Lizzy peelzer pannies down, rolling elastic top overriips, shez really godabod that Mizzy Lizzy, Leander intellectualizes (been as ease a product of Eutaw Town Union District Ha plus Fort Sealy Mae) but he don't *feel* no find.

He watches Mizzy Lizzy lift one foot, tother foot, lift offer drawers, kneel wirr back tomb tranger clothes neatly in a stack, Leander's eyes cresser flesh nee fines inself wondering where she leaves offen prosthies begin (those beaux up at Port Upatoi, boy!), Mizzy Lizzy guess back up m turns around facing Leandernee runs his eys over her:

:long, light, glistry hair waving overer shoulders, that sweet face he first eyegrabbed in sick bay, pale shoulders m those lovely perky persimmons with sweet-lookin pink

points, soft-lookin white belly wivva navel like a kissable dimple m blow it that sweetole hilly venus all covered with locks just awaitin the opened, soft, sleek thighs m legs as could wrap around a feller's waist erz neck with equal joy; Leander looks,

looks,

looks:

:but he don't *feel* nothing.

Specs he got his gear in order, peeps over the topperiz view finder, pushes a clutcha buttons, lights revolve, machinery whirls, this is no cheap-o operation, mind, pal.

Mizzy Lizzy advances toward Leander nee stands there waiting tsee what gonnappenext, all's he's gots on's 'is own pans, Mizzy Lizzy expertly slitsem open wivver fingernail, kneels in fronna Leander telpim off withem, leanin that sweet Salitpa phizovers against his lower abdomen (and we do mean lower, not to be indelicate, pal) as she does so.

He do not feel a thing.

—Haqnoui bring this off?—Leander axes elpletsly.

—Doe nax me—Specs contributes parsimoniously.

—Oh, he, *he*—zez Mizzy Lizzy—yoni ga think it tight, Leander, eyegas they dintell yevy dig backa P.U.—

(Mizzy Lizzy, she gots thinside monickervc Port Upatoi. Coy?)

Leander he say—Hah?—

Mizzy Lizzy she say (mildly impatient)—You gar firront hah yews prosthies, Lan!—

He lookena her, he admiring allat lovely shapethe got, he thinkna past experiences, Leander snow lothario, pal, but whahell, he's been around, tendered Entaw Town Union District Ha, ben thoo Fort Sealy Mae m many a happy weekend pass into Letohatchie, downat ole red rut road ats lead from Fort Sealy Mae tieto,

had shav horz m freebies, jes you bleeves no baby inexperienced tot, he's not.

But he don't . . . rat, rat, assa rat.

—You gotta think ont—Mizzy Lizzy peterself.

Leander Laptip reaches out, puts a hand on cacher shoulders (one organic, one prosthetic, you'd hardly know whichi' which although Mizzy Lizzy does you can bet) nee looks down adizown member nee thinks—Ho, beau, you a team plairowha? Gup they, up-a-up-a-hup-a-hup-hup-hup—

Not unlike a drill sergeant bagga Fort Sealy Mae niz recruit days, m lawmarcy thole gadget rises right as rain, few ole luminum extrusion rods, permeable pseudorganic filling, spannable pseudodermal covering, ureplastithan formed terminator, etc, etc.

Rat up, horizontal, elongated, aerated, polyunsaturated and inflated.

(rrr-dzzd-rrr)

—Hay, beau, airy go, assa show!!!—chcers Mizzy Lizzy Cadbell of Salitpa. —Hey less go!—

M she draps tfloor, pulls Leander down onter, opens up lak the Pearly Gates, mates, m pullzim inter.

She pussers arms around his shoulders.

He runsis hands overer boobsmbelly, keesis wait mostly on zelbows (a technician the lad is, maybe not a genius but a nadequate technician) m begins thole pumping.

He pumps away, m:

:pumps, m:

:pumps, m:

:pumps, m:

:hears thole cameras whirrnoway, m:

:Leander pumps, Mizzy Lizzy pumps, m:

:this do go on and on and on . . . m

alttrawile Leander he he Specs say—Thank ivvery mutts, assa nuffer test—

:m Mizzy Lizzy say—Ain yevva gun⁴ comboy?—

:m Leander sez—Ainothin happen!—

Mizzy Lizzy she sigh, she say—Leander, atoll you, you dealn wipros-thies, you gommake it happen, you gah think it to happen, ill happen, they gin yevvy need at P.U. you just gah learna uset . . . comb on—

M Leander, he conjews up ole pitches, ole recollects, he memmas some ole whorn Letohatchie, he memmas his first lay, some lil gallon Eutaw Town whassername, dang, whassername, re memmase pussy hair, soften silky lack corn thread, lil tits lack old goosey bums, *what* her name m:

:suddenly he memmas some pitches he sawed back upbawd some ole ship, mebbe *Jimmie O.*, mebbe *Leander Perez*, no, he rememmas now was way back upboard some trainy vessel, ole *States Rights*, New Alabama Navy, rat, nimsef line in zbunk look natta pitchern some magazine, some fukbuk, pitches Miss Merriass Markham doon weird stuff usin whips m chains m Leander things back tomb sef layin inz bunk m thinks—Ah, ah, gahcom—

:m glory be, he does, them ole medics upside P.U. they done him some job, Mizzy Lizzy she bin right, they gim evvy he need, *evvy*.

Mizzy Lizzy she say—Oak hay, now, Lan—

M Specs he say—Thanks very folks, ahl cut this tape a bit m ddiverta Mister Jenkin, yaw hear fromm shortly. Yaw onna laxna visitors' lounge ouch side please thank you ve much—

Leander he pulls his clothes back on. Mizzy Lizzy she dooda same, they

say thanksta Specs m bop outdoor down hall to the lounge, grabba cuppa, siddown, Mizzy Lizzy sez—How bow?—

Leander he say—Thin is, I din feel nothing—

Mizzy Lizzy she say—Watsoright, don gah, long zyickin perform. As-sall—

Leander he say—Zattall theres?—

Mizzy Lizzy jis nod.

Pee soon droppen, in come Mr. C. Balto Jenkin, puffna fat green stogie, giz oneta Leander, offers oneta Mizzy Lizzy, she say—Nodjust gnaw, thanks—

Mr. C. Balto Jenkin he say—Sawyer ushes, sawyer ushes, ewedo got fine potential, gah teach yevvy gah no, corse—

—Well—sez Mizzy Lizzy.

—Ahr—sez Leander Laptip.

—Yah cmoverda mah place tonigh, Mizzy Lizzy—zez C. Balto—m affix yup winstructor, Leander, dowurry, takarevy, takarevy. You two gombbe mah new stars!—C. Balto he slap meach onna shoulder, heartily. (*clank, clonk*)

M not to put too fine a nedge ont, C. Balto he a manniss word, no crookee, no cheaperjacko, he a solid bimmisman, wow! He teachy Mizzy Lizzy a few tricks, he senna lady do the same Leander Laptip, pee seen they ready for debut on planetwide vidpik.

Smasherooniel

Sensation in barrooms, barracks, homes, schools, churches, places of public amusement and/or employment, on beaches, in restaurants, and total global cetera.

C. Balto Jenkin he gettin rich offen Lizzy m Lan. They ain doon so bad-demsefs. Know, corse, artist never works for mere lucre, entrepreneur pussup risk money, runs d show, he

natural makes d doe. Rat? Rat.

But he pussup his two new stars, gizzem a pot mint together, servants, mechanics, charges their batteries on the N'Alabama Multimedia Cultural Combine account, putsair pain a nice safe truss account, gizzem both nice pin-money allowance outen they own money, and all damn cetera.

All they gah dooz makiz vidpix, fukbux, mwunsta year a big big planetwide personal appearance tour, compete winterviews, limousines, screaming fans, backstage scenes, groupies, floopies, droopies, met cetera.

Specs stix wim, coach m tech advice, nice.

Finely comes the best: technicians shuttle down fum Port Upatoi t take inna show, visit ole patience, check over kwimmin, chief tech makes a

couple suggestions, does a little minor rewirin for Leander m Mizzy Lizzy.

Tha nite, big personal coliseum show, Leandern Mizzy Lizzy emerge t super applause. Disrope, conjoin.

Mizzy Lizzy loosa Leander, he loosa her, wunnum zez—Oak hay—

They both reach ahind each tothern flick a miniswitch.

Click! Botheir prosthies go onna new autogyro drive.

Leander leans back, daydreamsa Eutaw Town.

Mizzy Lizzy leans back, daydreamsa Salitpa.

M they prosthies go on workna way, worknaway.

(click, whirr-bzzt-whirr, click)

(clank, zzzmz-brrb-zmzzz, clank)

Pal, it's a motherfuckin miracle!

—RICHARD A. LUPOFF

Our Vanishing Triceratops (cont. from page 26)

Somewhere, someday, Miocene grasses were beginning to bend under the weight of a ghost.

Daniel spun away.

The moon burned over the pools at the thicket's northern edge. The incredibly old mountain of flesh and armor was still there, but the flank had ceased to heave, and the eye was frosted over.

The man stood beside the carcass and listened to the faint slap of water against the body. The breeze stirred the grass around him. The racket from the thicket was growing louder.

Daniel detached the tissue tubes from his belt and tossed them, one at a time, as hard as he could, in the direction of the trees. Then he sat down beside Triceratops' thick tail.

You must have been sad and lonely and bitter about a great many things, he thought. *Wandering this strange era, longing deep and hard in your*

bones for the Mesozoic. Wondering why the world is so empty of your kind. Dying here of an overdose of time complicated by cancer and heartbreak and evolution. Here you die, here you'll corrupt and return to the dirt, and the little things back in the trees there will cover the world in a furry swarm, become men and return to this moment.

Daniel waited to feel horror at the awesome finality of his predicament. When it did not come, he fumbled at his belt. The sample-scraper hissed in his hand.

Then the two anachronisms by the water waited patiently as the mewlings and chitterings began to move forward in dark furtive streams, all furred flesh, gleaming eyes and small white teeth.

—JOE PUMILIA
& STEVEN UTLEY

THE RECRUITER

Moral choices are never easy ones—especially when they involve personal survival. . .

GLEN COOK

Illustrated by Richard Olsen

SOME PEOPLE will do anything not to die, I thought as I stalked through calf-deep trash in one of the light canyons of St. Louis. Year: 3035. Mission: recruiting for Colonial service. Those are the polite words they use on paper or in the holonetnews. In reality, I was a one-unit press gang, a human brain riding a Navy-uniformed metal monstrosity responsible for collecting the scum of the slum of the universe for export to population-starved outworlds. Old Earth rectified her balance of payments deficit by selling warm bodies.

Walk drunkenly in your tin man suit, act like an offworld Spike fool enough to wander the valley of the shadow alone. . . . Let them vent their envy and hatred of starmen on your tank of a body, then subdue a few and drag them to the Station where a lictor, with only your word to guarantee their criminality, will try, convict, and condemn them, and send them to the Colonial Draft. If they're good ones, not diseased or too far gone in psychotic rage against a universe that didn't see them born to the silver spoon, you'll earn a few retirement points. Enough of them, if you survive their attacks long enough, and you'll get yourself a real body, a good one, virgin-new, force-grown up from

a clone-cell salvaged from your corpse. Welcome to the company store.

Why didn't they just feed the outworlds clones and let Old Earth go to hell? That's all these ground hogs want, to be left alone to die in their self-imposed misery and filth. Never mind population reduction and control of criminals and failing production capacities. Never mind the mules, just load the wagon.

Some people will do anything not to die. I knew. That's why I rode the iron man through cement and waste paper jungles. Nothing's free. The masters in Luna Command want return on their investment. If an Old Earther got killed fighting McGraws or Sangarec on some nether frontier they usually let him die the death-without-resurrection and left him to lie where he had fallen. Neither the services nor the Old Earth planetary government cared to support the cost of shipment-for-funeral. But if you were lucky, your psych profile was right, and they caught you before your brain rotted, they sometimes kindled you and offered a bargain.

Men like me make deals with devils. The choice wore three faces after I died straightening the mess on Helga's World: I could go ahead and die;

I could request salvage, which meant being ego-scrubbed and cyborged in as control brain of some googol-bit data system somewhere; I could earn a new body recruiting colonists for my homeworld. Old Earth would purchase my contract from the Corps.

Didn't take much thought. I remembered Old Earth and how, when I left its squalor and hopelessness, I swore nothing would make me return. I remembered the driving need to escape its eternal smog of despair that, in the face of a cultural agoraphobia that was almost psychotic in its rejection of the starworlds, had led me to enlist in the Marines. I remembered all the things I'd fled, I'd thought, forever—then opted for life with a whole personality. I'd been gone long enough to forget how bad it really was. Old Earth seemed better than death. Those Psychs knew how to choose.

The light canyon began showing promise as its walls closed in. My electronic ears detected whispers and scurrings. Not rats. My ancestors had somehow managed to rid the world of those. Probably ate them all during the chaos following the collapse of World Commonweal in Century Twenty-Three. They ate everything then, including each other. Could be dogs. They'd been reintroduced from offworld. But more likely potential recruits. The sort I hunted frequented tight and shadowy places. And their infra-red suggested people.

They seemed to come from everywhere and nowhere, from places you couldn't have hidden a roach and shadows thin as their Social Insurance cards. Children. One of those gangs that enlisted no one with hair below the neck, vicious as piranha in their collective rage against anyone and ev-



everything. There were at least twenty of them, the females more feral than the males. The latter just wanted to hurt me, the starman who—I could no longer remember the convoluted logic that even I had once accepted—was responsible for the pointlessness and hopelessness of Old Earth life. But the females went for the groin, to destory the hook on which the offworld man hung his ego. Probably been exploiting some soul-abandoned hooker with it anyway. . . .

I had the hardest time recruiting the children. They weren't yet people, weren't really as lost as a man or woman who had survived to maturity in that bleak environment. Though they didn't know or believe it, for them there was still hope. I hated taking that from them.

But they *hurt* me. And the recruiter body was programmed to react even when the brain wouldn't. Down in the chest cavity there was a little solid-state auto-pilot/mechanical conscience whose sole purpose was to make sure the fallible driver up top didn't blow a potential recruiting situation through some vagary of compassion. Its methods were simple. When I didn't get on the job soon enough to suit, it opened pain circuits. Then I felt what my attackers were doing as deeply as would any starman stupid enough to get himself in a similar situation.

They hurt me and I screamed; audio-tape agonies echoed off walls and down canyons generations along the path to ruin. A girl child made for my eyes with hammer and rusty finger of iron while pot-belly, starveling boys pinned my arms and legs in rubbish and rubble. I had to act. They meant I should die.

Servo strength surged in my limbs,

voltage coursed my titanium skin. There were yips and shrieks and, humble-jumble, the little killers jumped or were hurled off. The fingers of my right hand were my arsenal, stunner, needler, gas gun, pinky a dainty beamer that could slice recruits up then as cold cuts and cook the blood into the slices. I sprayed a lot of gas, used the stunner on those observing, then the needler on a few trying to get away. In seconds I was the only upright form on the floor of that slash of shadow. "Twelve, thirteen," I counted. A nice baker's dozen. A lot of retirement points. The young ones were always worth more. Had more man hours left in them.

These would mean a substantial reduction in my remaining obligation—if I could get them to the Station without help-yelling. If I called a pickmeup, I'd have to share with the driver and defense-tech, and surrender most of my portion to repay the cost of fuel, maintenance, depreciation. . . . Welcome to the company store.

One solution was to take only those I could lug, three or four, but greed now completely obscured compassion. Despite all the paper stall thrown up like flak in my flight path, I was so near retirement I could smell it. St. Louis had been good recruiting.

I roped them together and woke them up. I'd quick-march them in with all senses combat-ready. Snipers would haunt the trek. Recruiters were damned unpopular. Before departing I used the laser to fire the canyon-bottom detritus. That would protect my rear and draw the attentions of those gutty enough to be outside. The periodic canyon fires were big events in lives otherwise pale on random stimuli.

There is just one word which fits

the condition in which the typical Old Earther exists: Poverty. Poverty of resources, of goods, of spirit, of morality, of intelligence, of courage. The brightest and richest and bravest got out generations ago; the moral were destroyed. The billions who remain are the descendants of those who hadn't the guts and off-your-ass to dump their welfare security and go where they could create something of their own. Rogues like myself turn up and opt out, commonly through the services, but we grow fewer in every generation. Old Earth is selectively breeding itself toward a whimpering Armageddon.

Station was a fortress I made steps ahead of a mob, with eleven resisting kids still trailing and one slow club-wielder worn as a stole. The door groaned shut behind us. Such hopelessness and despair filled their twenty-two little eyes. All would rather have died than face a real frontier. Old Earth was soul-desolation in human jungle, eye-deep in human-created horror, but to them it was secure, known, comfortable emotionally in its decay and deadliness, and required little of body or mind. The loathed starworlds would take care of tomorrow.

The door groaned shut and bodies smashed against it. It held long enough for me to herd my catch into a citadel room. Processing began immediately. Fingerprints, retinals, ID established. Move along now to the lictor. I'd seen it too many times before. The faces of the damned bore the resignation of Jobs by their God abandoned. I watched the relay of the mob breaking in to liberate them.

St. Louis hadn't been recruited much. In other zones the dullards knew better than to enter a door that gave. Station crew watched with

greedy glee as a crowd surged in before the lictor's eyes, breaking and entering. The trap closed. A little gas dropped gently in. They screamed, they trampled one another in an effort to force the door again. Futility.

Chuckles behind me. This meant points for everyone.

"Your lucky day, Klaus," I heard. "Big bonus on prepubescent today. Four points per."

Had I had a forehead of flesh I would have frowned. Sounded like. . . .

Whir. Communications printout coming in with our point credits as per now calculated at Recruiting Central in Geneva.

"Let's see. . . . You lucky Spike. You made a killing, Klaus. You only got two points to go. Two lousy points. Man." Envy there. The man had been in recruiting two years longer than I. Wasn't hungry enough to work the streets and canyons. Takes a special kind to stay with it long enough to get out.

I thought about those bonus points again. Suspicious. I checked the holocomm following processing. As I feared. Downdeep, two levels, my plunder was running through Medical, not for a Med-check. They were being anesthetized and fed to a battery of surgical Frankensteins, solid-state all, that opened heads like muskmelons and scooped brains into support/travel tanks for shipment to commercial wholesalers. Down the line little bodies were being salvaged for transplantable parts. Must be a big brain order in from one of the cryocyborgic data processors.

Old Earth's got to stabilize that balance of trade.

Engineering had seen to it that there were no distracting glands in my body. Couldn't get into a really

fine, shaking rage. It's hard to be mad when it's all in the mind, but I tried. I couldn't really stomach the brain snatching. But what could I do? We all do what we must to get what we need.

The choice was as simple as off-on. Stand by and not die, or revolt and joint the children on the disassembly line, enroute to computer interface consoles somewhere in the outworlds.

Someone popped to my moral crisis. The holo portrait changed. The new scene showed a clone tank percolating in a remote corner of Medica. My soon to be brain-home, the prize for which I'd jackboot-Pied Pipered the children to their ego-deaths. It was ready for occupation. They kept the clones near so we could be reminded whenever we caught a dose of conscience.

I wondered what it would be like to *feel* again (pain was the only sensation my metal horse could relay), to *smell*. I hadn't smelled anything but imagination since I died. The thoughts calmed me a little, but not enough. The old tin man suit's monitors must have been playing quisling.

"Only two more points, Klaus," someone reminded. Trying to tell me not to blow it now. Tradition is, everyone helps the man who's short. For some reason the fellow with the best excuse for playing hoyle is the most likely to break. Maybe because they've been at it so long. It builds, like strontium-90 deposits in the bones. "Two points. God, I envy you."

When I thought about it, I envied

me too. I could get out of the baby-stealing business almost any time. I just had to go catch a couple more. A week later I'd wake up a whole, free man, off Earth in Lima Command, credit in hand and passage to any frontier world available as soon as I learned to manage my new body.

Two points. Today one more kid would do, with points left over for friends. Friends? I hated them all, for what they were, mirrors in which I saw myself. They probably hated me. There'd be no reunions for this outfit. We were all predators devouring the weak.

I hated Old Earth and the cesspool of sub-humanity it had allowed itself to become. I wanted to pull cork and blow my fusion generator, myself, and the Station into the hell where we all belonged. I looked at that beautiful, virgin, scarfree young body in its clone tank and hated myself most of all.

Two points and it was mine.

I turned on a view of the hangers-round outside. Still a few children there. No one, not even Mr. Untouchable, Perfectly Just and Honest Lictor, would yell foul if I. . . . Points for him, too, you see. The lictor was still in flesh, but he was *old*. Youth was the one way to reach him.

I looked at the clone body, looked at the street. Time to make a choice.

I did.

What choice was there, really?

Some people will do anything not to die.

—GLEN COOK

ON SALE NOW IN FEB. FANTASTIC

A BIG ALL STAR ISSUE FEATURING L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP'S GREATEST NEW NOVELET—THE FIGURINE.

Rich Brown's story, "How You See It, How You Don't", appeared here last issue and marked his debut in this magazine. He returns with a shatteringly intense story—and one not for the squeamish. This one is a story you'll be talking about for months to come.

TWO OF A KIND

RICHARD W. BROWN

Illustrated by JOE STATON

I DIDN'T SHOOT HIM because he was making far too much noise.

But I had him clearly in the sights of my .30-06 while he was still 40 yards away, clomping clumsily down the sandy hillside through the brush and bracken. Myself, I was hidden at the base of the hill behind a large tree.

I kept him in my sights all the way down, resisting the urge to pull the trigger while trying to understand just exactly what it was that was keeping me from killing him—although, on some subconscious level, I already knew. It wasn't until he was 20 yards away that I actually saw the hazy blue outline of his field suit and understood completely.

Of course.

Only a Rip Van Winkle, a mental defective, or someone invulnerable to anything this side of a rocket-launcher, would make that sort of clamor out here.

He was *supposed* to be noisy—to draw my attention and fire.

I tried to determine where his partner might be, but gave it up as hopeless; the Feds are good at cat-and-mouse games, better than I could ever hope to be—and I'd had years of practice.

I also discarded the notion of just dropping my rifle and trying to get the hell out of there. That man coming down the hill knew I was here; so did his partner. The hidden man surely had me in his sights and was only waiting to see what I would do. If I tried to run for it, he'd kill me for sure. I couldn't even head back into the trees for cover; they would both have laser pistols.

I didn't know what I was going to do—until I did it. Then, when the noisy one was just 10 yards away, I stepped out from behind my tree, my rifle still at my shoulder, aimed it at his chest and shouted, "Hold it!"

He stopped.

He had nothing to worry about—regardless of what I might say or do, he would be walking away from his encounter, so he might as well listen and wait and see—and he knew it. That reasoning also tended to explain why his partner didn't send a laser bolt zipping through my head.

I yelled, "Who the hell are you, and what you doin' here?"

"I might ask ya the same," he yelled back.

"You might," I shouted back, "if you was holdin' the gun."

I somehow, throughout this ex-

change, managed not to show just how scared I really was, in either my voice or my stance. When your survival depends on it, you can do just about anything; when other people depend on your survival, you can do anything you have to—or so I kept trying to tell myself.

At least the pose *felt* right. In the back of my mind, I was just short of certain that I could bring it off—even though a nervous itch in the small of my back was anxiously anticipating the fiery hole that could be blown in it at any moment. There was no wind out here—you could almost say 'no air'—so it was only natural that I pre-spire.

"I *am* holding a gun," he said.

"Bull."

I fired at him as he dropped to one knee—knowing it wouldn't hurt him, but also knowing that I had to continue the pretense even if it meant that he or his friend might kill me—and he, in turn, pulled his laser pistol and blasted the ground in front of me. The dirt erupted into flame and stayed on fire until he released the trigger.

Coughing from the acrid fumes, no longer having to hide my fear but using it, I dropped my rifle.

"Ok, ok," I said, "you got me. Don't shoot!"

I put my hands over my head, but he kept the laser pointed at my midsection as he got to his feet and walked cautiously in my direction.

A twig snapped on my left—I was supposed to hear it—and I turned to see the second man, his eyes as cold and menacing as a snake's, also covering me. The second man was wearing a field suit, too, but it wasn't turned on.

"I think he's ok, Nate," the second man said without ever taking his eyes



off me. "He had you in his sights when you was 'way the hell up the hill. He could of ambushed you then, if he wanted, but he could see you was no nigger."

Nate—he'd walked close enough to me now that I could see the craggy features of his leathery face—scowled. But he put his pistol back in its concealed holster. "What the hell ya doin' in Disputed Lands?" he asked me.

Since the second man still had me covered, I kept my hands over my head. But I still managed a shrug as I said, "Lookin' for food."

"White meat?"

"Hell no," I said. "Not unless I got no choice. I ain't no fuckin' renegade, if that's what you mean. Like your friend said, I could have ambushed you any time. But I figured you was just a poacher, like me, and I was just gonna warn you off if I could."

Nate looked at his partner. "Whatcha think, Fred?"

Fred, the second man, was biting his lip, considering. "What's your name?" he asked me.

"Tucker," I said. "Tucker Wilson."

"Well, Tuck, how long you been poachin' in these parts?"

"Past two years."

"Any luck?"

"Mostly kids," I answered. "The older Bucks and their bitches stay pretty well hid. A few of them—the older ones—are pretty well armed. Automatic weapons and all that."

He nodded. I wasn't telling him anything he didn't already know. "So me and Nate've heard," Fred said. "Back Kansas City 'way, not many of 'em got out of the Big Fire—and those that did didn't have no guns worth talkin' about. Fact is, that's why me and Nate volunteered to come out here—ain't no fun. back

there, just trackin' 'em down and shootin' 'em. How'd they come to get guns here?"

I managed my hands-over-my-head shrug again. "Don't know," I said. "This's been rural since before the Breakup—I guess a lot of 'em lived on farms, had hunting rifles. And some of 'em was in the Old Army, too. I suppose when they moved out, they took their guns with 'em, and I guess they've traded up ever since. I've heard a few Wetbacks have run ammunition to 'em, too."

"Damned greasers," Fred spat. "They're next."

Nate, still looking at Fred, asked again, "Whatcha think, Fred?"

Fred, his eyes still on mine, asked, "Where you from, Tuck?"

I don't think I flinched. I'd known, sooner or later, they'd get around to asking me. I'd been thinking about it, too, trying to come up with an answer they'd accept. On the one hand, if I told them I was from some nearby town, they'd want to see my papers; on the other, if I claimed to have a farm nearby, they'd take me to a local farmer to see if he recognized—and therefore could vouch for—me. So the question was, did I want to burn in the frying pan or in the fire?

"Newberg," I said without hesitation.

Sure enough, Fred asked, "You got papers?"

I shook my head no. "Not with me, no. Like I said, I've been poachin'. We don't usually get Feds down here—"

"How'd ya know we was Feds?" Nate stuck in.

"Them fancy suits," I said, "and them fire guns. You could be New Army, 'cept you're out of uniform if you are. So I figure you're Feds."

"And we told him we was from

Kansas City," Fred said to Nate.

"And you told me you was from Kansas City," I agreed.

Fred nodded. "Go on. About your papers."

"I used to carry 'em. Not any more. Only people I expect to meet out here are poachers and niggers. If some other poacher don't warn off and we shoot it out and he kills me, he ain't gonna worry none about me havin' no papers on me. But I have to ask myself what happens if I meet a pack of renegades or niggers and *they* kill me? 'Specially if it's a pack of niggers—some of 'em can pass, y'know. They might take my papers and use 'em to buy guns, or settle in, or take up with some white woman and start givin' her black babies."

The excuse was flimsy, but plausible—and it had a certain emotional appeal. I just hoped the emotional appeal was strong enough to overcome its flimsiness.

"I say kill him," Nate said. But Fred shook his head no. Nate exploded, "Shit, *he* could be one of them passin' niggers."

"With straight blond hair?"

"They can straighten it. Ya never heard of bleach?"

"Sure, but look at that beard of his. He's been out here six, seven days at least."

"I still say kill him," Nate said sullenly. "Maybe he's a renegade. Maybe he's a passin' nigger. And maybe he ain't neither one. But the only other choice we got is to take him to Newberg, and I didn't come all the way out here just to go to Newberg—I came to get me a Buck."

Fred paused to consider that, then nodded. He turned back to me and once again leveled his laser at my naval. He spat into the dry dust and said, "Sorry, Tuck, but my partner's

right. If we had time to waste—"

"Hey, wait," I said, "hold on!" Neither of them said anything—but Fred didn't pull the trigger, either, so I went on: "Maybe I can make it worth your while. Newberg's 18 miles from here as the crow flies. Right on the way—well, with just a little jog off, about a mile, maybe less—right along the way I can lead you to the shack of the biggest Buck in this county. You'd never find it without me—I stumbled on it by accident."

A buzzard swooped down and flew toward one of the gnarled trees behind me; Fred turned his wrist just the slightest bit and winged it with his laser; I jumped back, having thought the shot was intended for me. Fred watched it flapping around on the ground for a while, then asked me, "How come you never got him, this Buck, yourself?"

"'Cause he's got a whole fuckin' arsenal up there," I said. "He's got a bitch and at least two kids, but I've never been able to lure 'em away from that shack."

"And you want to be our guide, eh?" Fred asked.

"A lot more than I want to get shot," I said. "You get the Buck; I get the kids—"

Nate laughed. "Goddamn if maybe I don't think he's a poacher," he said. "Here he is, lookin' certain death straight in the eye, and he's figurin' on us givin' him the kids."

"You said you was after sport, not meat," I said. "I got a family to support and I don't like to see good eatin' go to waste, is all."

"I like dark meat," Nate said with a grin, "but not for eatin'."

I laughed as good-naturedly as I could, under the circumstances, then turned back to Fred. "It makes sense," I said. "You gotta take your

Buck somewhere to get him skinned. Might as well be Newberg; it's as close as any. You can check me out then. Or you can kill me now and spend the next few months or years lookin' for that shack on your own."

"Ok, fella," Fred said, "you've got yourself a deal. Give me your rifle and lead on." As he said it, he flicked his field suit on. Nate had never turned his off.

Relieved for the moment, I picked up my .30-06 and gave it to Fred.

I wondered if they were planning to kill me afterward, anyway, without bothering with a trip to Newberg. For now it didn't matter. I thought about how a wolf will bite off its own paw to get out of a trap, about what it must feel like to be a dead man, and—again—about frying pans and fires.

For now I was still alive. But I'd have to take them both straight to the prize they wanted if I hoped to keep on breathing a while longer.

Neither of them said anything about the knife in my boot. Since it was sticking up over the side, in plain view for anyone who bothered to look, I decided I wasn't going to say anything about it, either.

WE FLODDED through the parched dry hills.

Nate, perhaps trying to make up for the fact that he'd suggested killing me out of hand, was talking to me: "I figure just killin' 'em's not enough. Right? Right. 'Specially with these suits—ain't no fun in that."

"Yeah. I understand." No. I didn't. But he would make sure I did.

He went on, "Ever since a girl cousin of mine got gang-raped by a pack of niggers—it didn't catch, but she still can't have no kids now—ever since then, I try to bring a little humiliation down on 'em, too, before

I kill 'em. Never really cared that much for that girl cousin, understand, but I figure I owe it to her as a white man, know what I mean?"

"Right," I said.

He might have been telling the truth—but just as likely he was justifying his proclivities in advance of my seeing them. Few whites have tolerated blacks—or any of the other races, for that matter—since the Breakup, but the Feds are always tested thoroughly to be sure they're maniacal about their work. A little perversion never hurts and is usually regarded as a plus.

Fred fell back into step with us to join the conversation. "Me and Nate've had some fine times. One of the best was back in Frisco, not all that long back. You think only niggers got big dongs? Shit! We caught this Chink—he had a tool about 12 inches long, and that was before it even got hard!" His eyes glazed over as he continued the remembrance: "We caught his daughter, too. Tied the old man up and fucked her good and proper, right in front of him—she had a tight little ass for a 12-year-old. Then we made her suck him off—told her we'd let him go if she did it right—"

Nate interrupted to steal the punch-line: "—only we didn't let him come. We waited 'til she got him nice and hard, slit her throat, then we nailed his cock to the kitchen table and set the house on fire!"

They both laughed.

"You say," Nate continued, "this Buck we're after's got a wife and kids? What's she look like?"

"Young," I said, "and pretty for a nigger bitch."

"Hah!" he said. "Might be fun to have some fun with her while he's lookin' on—before we kill him. Right? Right."

I gave them both my biggest grin: "It might be fun, at that." All the wheels inside my head began to whirl and I started to feel a little dizzy. Although the ideas that were starting to form were only half-complete, it began to seem as though this might all come out all right after all.

A little further on I said, "Oh, shit!"

"What's the matter?" Fred asked, suddenly alert.

"That rock," I said, pointing to a huge boulder veined with blue and black.

Fred considered the boulder before he said, "What about it?"

"It shouldn't be here," I said. "I mean, we shouldn't be. We should have veered off towards the mountain before this."

Nate touched the butt of his laser pistol. "You ain't leadin' us off on no wild goose chase, are ya son? 'Cause if you are, I'll burn you right here and now—"

"No, honest," I said. "I made a mistake. It's only about a half mile, but we could have been there by now."

They accepted my explanation and we veered, heading for the mountain.

WE WERE GETTING pretty close.

"Go easy now," I said. "We're getting close. Just over the top of that rise and we'll be able to see the shack."

They both looked at me and smiled; with the field suits they were wearing, they didn't have to worry about 'going easy' or care about whether they were seen or heard, but they knew I did. "You just stay behind us," Fred said.

The two cleared the rise together and saw not just the shack, neatly hidden away under the sparse shrub,

but the woman as well. Nate back-handed Fred's shoulder—his hand jumped away as their suits came close to making contact—and exclaimed, "Jeez, will ya look at them knockers!"

"Knockers, hell," Fred said in kind, "look at that ass!"

She was young, all right, and perfectly formed; she had hair and skin as black as the proverbial ace of spades. Her two young red-haired children, playing under her watchful gaze, were almost white in comparison—although in fact their skin was as deep a rich brown as her eyes.

The two men, standing in plain view, took it all in. She was paying too much attention to the children to notice them.

Finally, when Nate said, rather loudly, "But where in hell's her Buck?" she looked up. She saw them. Slung over her arm was a double-barrel shotgun which she raised to her shoulder; she gave Nate both barrels. The blast sent him sprawling, but he was laughing even before he hit the ground.

I hit the ground and hugged it. I heard her yell "Run!" and looked up in time to see the children sprinting; in opposite directions, to the nearby surrounding woods.

She dropped the shotgun then and, just like a woman, headed for the shack; it offered no real protection but it was, after all, her home.

Fred was after her immediately; Nate was back on his feet again and just a short distance behind him.

I brought up the rear by a considerable distance.

By the time I got to my feet, dusted myself off and ran down to the shack and in the door, they already had her down on the floor; she was sobbing, her blouse had been ripped from her body and discarded be-

hind her and Fred was standing over her.

Fred looked over at me, his eyes squinting shrewdly, as I entered. "Thought you were interested in the kids," he said. It was a question.

"I am," I said. "But I can track 'em later—after you get her Buck and I get my rifle back. Besides, from what you guys were sayin', I figured this might be more interesting."

The woman swung her head to look at me and her expression might have changed, but at that point Fred slugged her hard, back-handing her with a first, and she slammed back against the floor.

"You're right, Tuck," Fred said with a grin. "This is gonna be more interestin'."

He turned his attention back to the girl and the grin disappeared to be replaced by something cold and mean. He kicked her in the stomach and she moaned and he kicked her in the stomach again. "Where's your Buck, nigger bitch? Out huntin' white meat?"

I could tell she was really scared—as could Fred and Nate—but she didn't say a word. This was just what Fred and Nate wanted, though; Fred was shaking with pleasure and excitement while Nate was standing across the room, his laser pistol in his hand, laughing silently at her distress.

She rolled over on her stomach to protect herself from further kicks there. Fred grabbed her arms, pulled them behind her back and tied them with a leather thong that had been dangling from his belt. He looked back at me and the grin appeared—like a light he worked with an on-and-off switch from inside his head. "You ever had any poontang while huntin', Tuck? These nigger bitches are built for fuckin' in the mouth and ass."

She turned her head to look up into Fred's cold, hard eyes. "What—What are you going to—"

He slapped her again, catching her face between his hand and the hard floor, this time with the grin widening on his face. "Open your mouth for anything but suckin' cock, nigger bitch, and I'm gonna burn the end of your tit off." He got up off her and touched the butt of his pistol for emphasis.

Nate, whose grin almost matched Fred's, said, "We're gonna be fuckin' ya when that Buck of yours comes in. We're gonna be fuckin' ya and pissin' and shittin' on ya, and you're gonna be lickin' our cocks and balls and assholes, 'cause if ya don't . . . if ya don't . . ."

"If you don't," I said, "we're gonna go outside and find that little boy of yours. Then we'll bring him back here and cut his pecker off—while you watch."

Nate looked at me appreciatively—I was one of his kind, he was sure—and said to her, "And after that, we'll make you eat it."

The woman turned over on her side to look at me; her eyes, this time, were glazed and shocked, and seemed to be saying that this couldn't possibly be happening.

Fred said, "Get out of your clothes, Tuck."

She looked from Fred to Nate to me. I unbuttoned my shirt, took it off and threw it in a corner. Then I took the knife out of my boot, casually set it aside on the floor, and pulled off my boots. Lastly, I stepped out of my pants and underwear.

"Ok, sweet honey lips," Fred said to the girl, "you just get on over there to him and start suckin' his cock." She just glared at him. He walked around behind her and kicked her in the back. She started to get

up, like he said, but he kicked her again—and again—and again.

Through all of this she hardly made a sound. "Uh" when he kicked her—that was about it. But then he pulled his pistol from its holster, made an adjustment, said "You just ain't listenin' too good, nigger bitch," aimed it at her shoulder and pulled the trigger.

She screamed.

It was a scream of anguish and unendurable pain; she writhed and kicked on the ground, trying to get away, but Fred just kept moving the pistol, sending its ray up and down her bare arm.

He let his finger off the trigger and kicked her in the stomach again.

"Ya gotta learn, bitch," he said. "When I say do somethin', I want ya to do it right away. I don't want to have to say things twice. You do what I tell you when I tell you, or I'll give you more of this—and I like doin' it, I really like watchin' you roll around on the floor and scream." He pointed the pistol at her belly and pulled the trigger again; again, she screamed, and again—after a while—he stopped.

"Go suck him off," he said again, quietly.

He had obviously worked this all out before—from experience—to achieve the effect he wanted, going from terror to pain to quiet exaltitude. She started to get up, to do what he said, but he grabbed her by the hair and hauled her roughly up to her knees and forced her toward me. I kicked my pants, underwear, boots and knife aside.

"Make her lick it first," Nate said to Fred. "Make her lick his cock and balls."

Fred yanked on her hair. "Open up," he said. "Suck it. That's what your nigger lips were made for. And no teeth. My friend Tuck don't like

no teeth—just take it all the way down your throat and use lots of tongue. Or I'll keep you rollin' around the floor for half an hour."

She looked up at me and I looked back into her eyes, my hands on my hips; then Fred forced her down over me. Hesitantly, she started to do what they said, and they started to get worked up just watching us.

"Look at her," Nate said. "Look at her going down on it. Shit!"

"When he comes, you swallow, it, black bitch! Just keep suckin' and drinkin' his come, or I'll put my pistol in your black cunt and let you see how that feels!" Fred kept one hand gripped on her hair but with the other he was massaging his groin. "Anything you spill you can lick up off the floor."

Fred let go of her hair, waited with his hand poised above her head to see that she continued doing what she had been told, then said to Nate: "Keep your suit on and watch out for her Buck. I'm gonna help ol' Tuck fuck. While he's fuckin' her mouth, I'm gonna stick mine in her ass."

Nate nodded, continued to laugh silently.

"Shit," Fred said as he disrobed, "look at that bitch go down on him. Tuck you're all right." He was out of his shirt and starting to take his pants off. His field suit was turned off—he couldn't very well screw and have it turned on at the same time—but Nate still had his turned on and his laser pistol in his hand. Nate had no difficulty watching what I was doing to the girl while keeping an eye peeled out the window for her Buck; the shack had been situated so that it could be approached from only one direction.

Fred stepped out of his pants. He wasn't wearing any underwear. He came up from behind her, reached

around slow and started squeezing her large well-formed breasts; it started as a massage, but ended up a painful twisting of her nipples. While he continued to maul one breast, he reached down with his other hand, unzipped her jeans, and started to pull them down over her hips.

She made a protesting sound.

"Don't talk with your mouth full," Nate said, snorting.

"Yeah," Fred said. "You just keep suckin' him 'til he comes." He let go of her breast and used both hands to pull her pants down to her knees. Gritting his teeth and looking up at me, he started working his middle finger into her ass.

I stepped back, pulling myself free of her. "I'd rather have sloppy seconds on her ass," I said.

"Sure," Fred said. "if she's got any left when I get through with it. I'm gonna split her up the middle." He looked like he was big enough.

He grabbed the thongs which bound her wrists and pulled up on them, and pushed her down until her head was on the floor, meanwhile working his middle finger in and out.

"I'm gonna piss on her," Nate said. "Then I'm gonna stuff my shit in her mouth and make her eat it."

I nodded—a grimace, when no one's really paying attention, can suffice for a smile—and said, "But it's a pity she ain't tasted no white come—I'd do it myself if I didn't want to bugger her black hole so much."

"You figure maybe I owe it to her, as a white man?" he asked, smiling. He watched through glazed eyes—although dutifully glancing at the window every so often—as Fred held his penis in his hand, trying to push it up into her. She moaned in anticipation of the new pain, then moaned again, louder, as Fred made his breakthrough and savagely pushed in.

"Yeah," Nate said at last, "yeah, I guess I owe her that."

Trying not to show nervousness, I said, "I'll keep watch. I'll be able to spot her Buck long before he can get here."

"Sure." Nate turned his suit off, holstered his pistol and started pulling his shirt up over his head.

When Fred yelled, "Look out!", Nate didn't even have time to pull it back down. I scooped my knife from the floor and plunged it directly upward under his chin, right to the hilt, and left it there.

Nate only had time to gurgle and bleed.

I, on the other hand, had plenty of time to lift his laser pistol from its holster before he fell over.

"Loretta, move!" I yelled.

She lurched away from Fred, flattening herself on the floor—enough so that I could get off a clear shot.

The beam lopped off the upper lefthand corner of his head. Fred looked down with his remaining eye at his erect penis, saw it spurt, then feel over, dead, on top of her.

Loretta screamed and fought her way out from under his naked corpse although she was hampered by the thongs on her wrists and half-pulled-down jeans around her feet.

I held the pistol straight out, looking at it and thinking, *Two lasers and two field suits—now we can do anything.* But I knew, even as I was thinking it, that it wasn't really true; they both ran off power packs, and the power packs would run down—eventually. Maybe not for a long time, but sometime. We'd just cut the odds against our survival. That was all.

I slowly lowered myself into a sitting position and straightened the fingers of my hand until the pistol dropped with a clatter to the wooden

floor. I looked at it and at my wife, huddled on the floor sobbing and crying and looking at me, and I knew that I should at least be saying something to her, untying her bonds, helping and comforting her—something. I started to speak, but a wave of nausea hit me; vomit, rather than all the words I might have wanted to say, erupted from my mouth, spattered my bare front and settled in a puddle on the floor.

Sometime later—somehow, she'd

gotten free of her bonds—I felt Loretta's hand on my shoulder.

"Go get the children," I said, wiping my mouth with the back of my hand. "I'll clean up this mess and have these two out back and hung for butchering before you get back."

I realized then that the laser pistol would make the chore of butchering them a lot easier than it had ever been.

That made me feel a little better.

—RICHARD W. BROWN

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THOSE THRILLING DAYS OF YESTERYEAR

JACK C. HALDEMAN II

Jack C. Haldeman made his debut here with the much-praised "Watch-dog" (May, 1972). His newest story for us may explain a great deal about his recent absence from these pages. . .

Illustrated by Tony Gleeson

WHEN I WAS nine years old and still carried snails in my pockets, I had a burning interest in Indian lore. I read all the books about Indians I could get my hands on. My walls were covered with prints of the old west. I longed to hunt for pieces of broken pottery, a difficult task for a kid on the Lower East Side. I rummaged through back alleys, dreaming of the relics that must certainly lie buried just beneath my feet, hidden under the cement.

I finally realized that if I wanted to collect artifacts I would have to buy them. I borrowed my brother's tattered Johnson Smith catalog and sent away for an arrowhead. As requested, I taped the quarter to a piece of cardboard but that didn't seem to make my order come any faster.

After an almost unbearable wait of nearly two weeks, my package finally arrived. I tore it open and sure enough, inside was my genuine Indian arrowhead, glued to a small piece of cardboard inscribed "Greetings From The Grand Canyon".

I sat in my room for hours, just holding it in my hand, turning it around and around, feeling how incredibly *old* it was. I imagined how it

had been made—felt each little sliver being chipped away. In my dreams it killed a thousand palefaces and countless buffalo.

A couple of years later I got the chance to escape the city for a few months by going to a summer camp in the Catskills. They offered the usual camp things—swimming, hiking, boating, fishing, camping and *Indian lore*. I wanted to wear my head-dress to camp, but my mother wouldn't let me. I'll bet I was the only kid in camp with his name sewed on his toothbrush.

Upon arrival at camp we had to sit through a boring talk by some old guy who told us to wash our socks, write home and stay away from the girl's camp across the lake. After he finished, I ran over to the main building where the displays were kept.

One whole wall was full of Indian stuff. I had never seen so many beads and moccasins. I could hardly control my excitement. Jumping up and down, I was making little squeeking noises when my eyes were caught by a display of Indian weapons.

Right in the middle was my arrowhead.

My young mind filled with fear.

Those dirty sneakers had gone to my house and torn my arrowhead from its little piece of cardboard for their stinking display. I sweated the rest of the summer out because my mother wouldn't come and take me home. I never told anyone but Fat Ray, who laughed at me.

But I knew my arrowhead when I saw it. I knew every imperfection. It *had* to be mine.

My mother must have thought I was crazy when I didn't even stop to pet my dog after we finally arrived home from camp. I rushed into my room and dumped the top drawer of my dresser out on the bed. Sure enough, buried in there with the dried snake skin and broken bear tooth was the piece of cardboard. And the arrowhead was still stuck there with its little dab of glue.

Later, of course, I would realize that the similarities between the two arrowheads were characteristic of the Kereson influence on the Pueblo culture. The trailing deckle edges are quite distinctive.

My childhood was not entirely centered around the Indian past. I started collecting coins in the sixth grade, though I had an awfully hard time of it. I couldn't find much of anything over ten years old. I would often go to Macy's and browse through their coin department, staring at the coins in their neat little cellophane packets. Occasionally I would ask to hold them and if there was a kind face behind the counter I could feel them and let the sheer weight of their age sweep over me. They were very expensive. I never found any in circulation and my collection was spotty.

Of course I enrolled in Archaeology when I went away to college. Surprisingly enough, my interest sustained



me through the boring introductory classes. Maybe it was the bull sessions that kept me going. We used to argue about man's past and future over mugs of 3.2 beer well into the night.

Four years later, much to my surprise, I found myself with a BS and a letter of acceptance to graduate school. It was from a very prestigious East Coast University with a strong field program in the American Southwest. They even provided me with a scholarship.

The first year of classes I noticed that the PhD candidates formed a very aloof clique. This bothered me at first, as I could have used their advice, but my studies kept me pretty busy. Summer and my first field project came much faster than I had expected.

It was a hot, dry New Mexico summer. We dug and cataloged Indian relics for three months. I saw so many arrowheads that they all began to look alike.

The instructors seemed to be more interested in the relic's location than in what we actually found. I guess they too had been jaded from over-exposure to the past. I remember one time I got really excited over a nearly intact tomahawk I found under a large rock outcropping. The instructor was unimpressed. He said it looked a bit crude and asked me precisely where I had found it. He took it all down in a small black notebook and muttered something about grades.

Next summer we were back in the field again, though there were fewer of us. Shortly after arriving, two of the full professors took about ten of us to another part of the desert for "special training".

We ended up spending the rest of the summer out by ourselves. It was a strange field project. Instead of dig-

ging up artifacts, we were instructed to bury them.

The instructors explained to us that we were to spend the summer getting the *feel* of what it must have been like to live in the old days. It was a very progressive university, leaning heavily towards modern theories of education. We lived in crude tents and spent the endless days under the glaring sun.

We were kept constantly busy, running around burying artifacts. It wasn't easy, either. You don't just dig a hole and drop an arrowhead into it and cover it up. There's a lot more to it than that.

First you have to decide on the location. There are certain rules to follow. Arrowheads aren't distributed in random patterns. There has to be a reason for that particular arrowhead to be in that *exact* spot—buffalo runs, battlefields and such. Arrowheads were hard to make and the Indians retrieved as many as they could.

Then you have to place and cover the arrowhead. It must be in a natural position. A small bit of the arrow's shaft is a nice touch, but you have to be especially careful to remain authentic.

We quickly got into the swing of things. It was actually kind of fun.

But there was nothing fun about the professors. They took all this very seriously and graded hard. By the end of the summer over half the group had been sent back with the regular students.

Next year's classes were frustrating. There seemed to be undue emphasis on the types of artifacts we should expect to find in order to support current theories. There was almost no mention of what you should do when you found something unusual. But I worked hard and continued to do well

and soon I was very near the top of my class.

The chairman of the department was to take six of us out the next summer for independent research. A week before we were to leave we had a meeting and he dropped the bombshell.

"Gentlemen," he said, "You are the best of the best and to you will fall the obligation to continue the work of those of us who have gone before. It is a responsibility I am sure you won't take lightly. We know you can handle it or you wouldn't have advanced this far." He paused and leaned back against the blackboard, smearing the chalk.

"You may have wondered why we seem to place such emphasis on the mechanics of burying artifacts. There is a reason for this. If we didn't bury them, there wouldn't be any."

I dropped my books on the floor.

"For some reason there are no artifacts left from previous civilizations, no fossils, nothing." He paused, drew himself up straight. "Gentlemen. We are archaeologists. We make our living from the past. If there is no past, it is necessary for us to invent one."

It was difficult for me to accept this at first, but after several years in the field and many weeks studying musty records in various university libraries, I have a pretty good grip on what is happening.

I am now a specialist in Southwestern Indian arrowheads. I bet I've made a million of them in my little basement lab. I've travelled all over

the west burying them. Occasionally I even report finding them. It keeps me published and the university I teach at has pretty strong requirements in that direction.

Sometimes I wonder what the overall picture looks like. I've grown to accept all this running around burying beads and arrowheads. I often meet paleontologists with bags of freshly made dinosaur bones and fossil ferns while I'm out in the field. But by an unspoken agreement we seldom talk to each other. How far does all this go?

I have my own theories. I believe the world, or maybe the universe, is slowly winding down and things from the past are just disappearing. This is easier to accept than the notion that these things never existed. It is somehow easier to believe that there *once* was a past and now there isn't. I can't imagine there never having been a past.

But I can't help being curious. Last week I talked to my brother-in-law who lives in Detroit. By careful questioning I was able to uncover what may be a significant fact.

Deep in a dusty, half-forgotten corner of one of the old assembly buildings a handful of people are hard at work producing small numbers of 1937 Chevrolets, complete with crumpled fenders and broken tail lights.

And I can't remember the color of my father's eyes.

—JACK C. HALDEMAN II

Vol Haldeman is Jack C. Haldeman II's wife and this story marks her first professional publication. . .

AN ANIMAL CRIME OF PASSION

VOL HALDEMAN

Illustrated by Steve Fabian

THE GNILP CONSTABLE waggled down the street. His shiny green scales clattered as he rippled his muscles in sequence. He had polished them before coming on duty and thought they looked lovely in the moonlights. As he made his rounds he waved his flashlight into the mouths of the dark alleys and tried doorlocks with his subdominant tentacle. On Market Street he thought he saw something in an alley. He looked closer and froze.

He was literally unable to move. The instinctive reaction of a Gnulp confronted with a frightening or dangerous stimulus is to freeze into immobility. Ordinarily this was no barrier to police work on the unendingly peaceful planet Romir. Procedures had been developed, however, to deal with the occasional Gnulp who went into stasis on duty. When he failed to respond to the next routine radio check, a colleague was sent out to find him.

The Wod constable located the Gnulp with no trouble. He was standing in plain sight on a main street staring down an alley. The Wod edged cautiously around him. He saw

the small Ylf face down on the cobblestones. He saw the dark purple blood on the fur.

The Wod also fell victim to instinct. His flight-or-fight reaction prepared his body to deal with an emergency by cutting off nonessential processes like digestion and increasing the food and oxygen supply to his muscles. He vomited up the contents of his three stomachs and ran off as fast as his six legs could carry him.

In his panic he failed to notice a large Tal striding purposefully down the street. The Wod ran right up against him, squeaked in horror, and recoiled. He lifted a shaking paw and pointed it bravely at the terrifying Tal.

"You're under arrest," he stammered.

Nula gazed down at the little Wod kindly. "You've made an error, Officer," he began politely. "I—"

The Wod jumped backwards three feet. "Stay where you are!" he shrieked. He slapped at the emergency stud on his radio link. He felt around in all the pockets of his utility belt twice and found his restraints. He pulled them out,

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RALEIGH	16 mg.	1.1 mg.	L&M KING SIZE	19 mg.	1.2 mg.
VIRGINIA SLIMS	16 mg.	1.0 mg.	TAREYTON 100's	19 mg.	1.4 mg.
PARLIAMENT 100's	17 mg.	1.0 mg.	WINSTON KING SIZE	19 mg.	1.3 mg.
L&M BOX	17 mg.	1.1 mg.	L&M 100's	19 mg.	1.3 mg.
SILVA THINS	17 mg.	1.3 mg.	PALL MALL 100's	19 mg.	1.4 mg.
MARLBORO BOX	17 mg.	1.0 mg.	TAREYTON	21 mg.	1.4 mg.

Source: FTC Report Apr. 1976

*By FTC Method

Warning: The Surgeon General Has Determined
That Cigarette Smoking Is Dangerous to Your Health.

looked at the enormous tusked Tal, looked at the restraints, looked at the Tal.

Nula essayed a friendly smile. The sight of his pointed teeth was too much for the overwrought Wod. His eyes rolled back and he fainted. He fell on his side with a thump and all six legs went limp. His fur lost its sheen.

Nula looked down at him doubtfully. Bother! What next? He reached out and touched the Wod with a tentative claw. No response. He poked harder. Just then what felt like the rest of the Romir police force arrived and landed on him.

Nula awoke to the sound of moaning. Fairly soon he noticed that he was making the noise. He thought about it deliberately. He wasn't at all sure if his pain was physical or mental. They'd used stun beams on him, yes, and his head hurt like blazes, but upon careful consideration he decided he had a bad case of 'you should have known better.' He moaned once more and shut up.

After a decent interval he cautiously opened his eyes. Old-fashioned jail, he noted professionally. Bars, electric locks on the steelplated doors. He stood up and looked out. A trusty was wheeling a cart up the aisle handing out food. When he got to Nula's cell he stood well back and tossed a bunch of carrots towards him, then turned and ran, bumping his cart before him.

Nula was too surprised to call out. He watched the trusty go, retrieved the carrots. Damn vegetarian planet! Why did he have to get stuck on a planet full of herbivores who fell apart at the mere sight of a carnivore? And why was the little Wod trying to arrest him in the first place? For being a carnivore? Violating a curfew?



Nula didn't think so. He munched a carrot thoughtfully.

He had eaten all the carrots out of boredom by the time the guards came to escort him. He was irritable, his head hurt, and he could imagine what all that roughage would do to his digestive system. But he behaved like a model prisoner. He permitted the guards to apply the restraints. He walked slowly so they could keep pace. The leader gestured with his stun gun and Nula entered an anteroom.

They waited. And waited. Occasionally sounds from the inner office reached them—mostly giggles, Nula thought—and eventually a Ylf secretary emerged. She paled at the sight of the Tal. "Demon!" she spat at him angrily. Nula blinked in surprise. He didn't understand any of this. What was he supposed to have done?

The guards urged him on into the office. There was a fat Wod behind a desk. He inspected Nula with a practiced glance the Tal recognized immediately. Aha, the chief of police, he thought with satisfaction. It's about time.

"Sir," Nula began eagerly, "permit me to present my identification."

"Eh?" The Wod was surprised. Most of his prisoners stubbornly resisted disclosing so much as their names.

"It's in my pouch," Nula continued. "If one of the guards could reach in. . ."

The police chief was nonplussed. He motioned to the leader of the guards. The Gnlp strode confidently forward but failed to complete the motion of his tentacle towards the Tal. As he hesitated, Nula bent his neck politely to give him a chance to grasp the pouch that hung on his chest. The guard leader backed up

abruptly.

"I won't hurt you," Nula said patiently. "Please reach in and get out my papers."

The guard approached again. He warily made contact with the pouch and drew out a sheaf of papers, then jumped backwards immediately. Breathing hard, he presented them to the chief.

The chief surveyed Nula skeptically, then dropped his eyes to the documents. He looked up again at once.

"Eh?" he repeated. He looked carefully at all the papers, straightened the stack neatly. "Release the prisoner," he ordered. The guards hesitated. The chief cupped his paw and made a motion as if pushing them towards Nula.

They approached and removed the restraints. He said thank you politely and seated himself comfortably. The chief dismissed the guards and turned towards Nula.

"Sector Police Captain Nula, I regret my men did not examine your identification before arresting you yesterday," the chief said formally. He returned the papers to Nula. "I'm sure you can understand they were simply doing their jobs. How did you come to be on Romir?"

"Yes, I understand that. And I understand that they are afraid of my species. But I don't understand what charge that first little Wodi officer was arresting me for." Nula replaced the documents in his pouch. "Oh, and as for being here, I was stranded when the spaceliner put in for repairs. I am enroute to the police academy on Lutz for the graduation ceremonies."

"Well—since you're here—perhaps you could assist me," the chief said practically. "We have had a crime of violence, which basically we are not

equipped to deal with. Romir is by nature peaceful. We have read about, studied, seen holos of these types of crimes but have had no actual experience with them."

"A violent crime on Romir? How odd. But it's been many years since I carried on a field investigation," Nula said modestly. "Besides, the spaceliner must be ready to lift by now."

The chief was blunt. "It lifted two hours ago."

Nula frowned. "And the next scheduled?"

"Next week."

Nula shrugged and cooperated with the inevitable. He wasn't the type to cry over split beer. Still—a week on this damned vegetarian planet and he'd be ready to commit a crime of violence himself for a hamburger.

"Tell me about it," Nula said. He settled back to listen.

The chief began matter-of-factly. "Yesterday morning a Gnulp constable making his rounds discovered an injured Ylf in an alley. The Gnulp went into stasis at the shocking sight; even an accidental injury can stimulate stasis in a Gnulp. When he failed to report, a Wod was sent out after him. The Wod saw the Ylf, became frightened, and ran." He paused briefly. There was the hint of a smile on his face.

"He ran into you, Captain Nula. You carnivorous Tals would be enough of a shock on a calm day. But meeting one immediately after a crime of violence had been committed—well—the constable leaped to a conclusion. He attempted to arrest you for the crime," the chief explained.

"What crime?" Nula asked patiently.

The chief's voice lowered. "Rape. A

young Ylf female. She's still in hospital, unable to talk about it yet."

Nula was puzzled. "Here? On Romir? That doesn't make sense."

"Of course it doesn't," the chief said. "Our population is genetically, hereditarily peaceful. So obviously someone from offplanet, better yet, a carnivorous barbarian, made an excellent suspect."

"Yes, I see that," Nula agreed. "When can we try to question this young female? A description would help a lot."

"You'd scare her to death," the chief protested.

"I'll, I'll chew on a carrot or something," Nula said accomodatingly. "Or wear a surgeon's mask and gown. But I want to hear what she says."

"Eh? Okay. Let's go down there then." The chief got to his feet.

They made their way through the streets to the hospital. Citizens stopped to stare at the Tal or walked quickly in the opposite direction. Children cried. Nula noticed with relief that babies were indiscriminating. He was really a gentle sort, and regretted frightening all these people.

At the hospital they spoke with the victim's doctor. He assured them that her injuries were distressing but minor and gave permission for them to talk to her. Nula borrowed a mask.

The victim was talking to a nurse as they entered. She was small for her species and had soft-looking brown fur shading to gold on her abdomen and chest. She lay on her side with her four legs carelessly splayed out. She had a gauze bandage wrapped around her head and some visible contusions on her neck.

The police chief introduced himself and explained that they had come to take her statement. The nurse left the room.

"Tell me what happened," the chief began. The Ylf cut him off.

"It was a monster, a barbarian, with pointed teeth and a big—er—and he knocked me down, I was on my way home from the store," she said excitedly. She sat up. "And he grabbed me and told me to hold still. He held me down. Then he told me to be quiet, and he made this horrible, horrible noise."

"But—" The chief tried to get a word in.

"And then he—er—you know and when he did he called me a . . ." she sputtered indignantly. "He said I was just a—a—bitch in heat! I never heard such a thing!"

"But . . ." No luck.

"And he—oh!—patted me on the head! I was never so humiliated in all my life!"

"But, Miss," Nula put in softly. His growly voice stopped her. "We need a description of your attacker. What did he look like?"

"Oh," she said blankly. "Um. Well, he had a big—er—you know." The small Ylf squirmed uneasily.

"Yes, yes, but the rest of him," Nula said helpfully.

"Oh. Um. Well, uh, I guess I didn't see much of the rest of him," she mumbled.

The police chief had his head in his forepaws already. Nula persisted.

"Well, was he larger or smaller than you? Than your entire body," Nula added precisely.

"Oh, larger. Almost as big as you." Her voice faltered.

"How many legs did he have?"

"Uh. . ." Looking at Nula doubtfully, "four, I guess."

"Did he have fur or scales or feathers or what?"

"Er, ho." She actually giggled. "He was slippery. He had outworlder skins on but he was all slippery underneath."

"Did he have a tail?" Nula persisted doggedly.

"Um. I don't remember," she shrugged.

The doctor came in and shooed them out. Nula was grateful. He took off the mask and turned to the chief.

"Nope," the chief answered before he spoke. "No other outworlders reported on Romir. They all went off with your spaceliner. I checked."

Nula sighed.

"I know the passenger list fairly well," he explained. "I've been traveling with them since Niac, about three weeks time. There are only two species abroad with four legs and both of them are furred. Most of the passengers are those feathered Niacins off on a tour."

"I don't suppose one of the furry ones could have shaved itself? No, I guess not," the chief admitted. "Oh, my, that does complicate the case."

They walked slowly back to the station. The crowds gaped and made way for Nula. He absently scanned the throngs for any person matching the victim's sketchy description, but he wasn't very confident of finding one. Especially without being able to see its sexual parts, he thought wryly.

"Perhaps the young lady could draw a picture," Nula suggested as they entered the office.

"Of his—er—?" The chief raised his shaggy eyebrows.

"If that's the only thing she can identify him by!"

The chief chuckled. "Well, maybe so," he said. "Maybe so." He dispatched an order for a constable to request a sketch from the victim.

"In the meantime," Nula continued, "let's get some pictures of some common four-legged offplanet species with slippery skins for her to look at. Maybe she can pin it down for us."

"Okay. I'll ask the library. Uh, do you

know any slippery-skinned species with four legs offhand? I mean, to start with?"

"Not a one," Nula answered. "Which could make it easy if there aren't very many."

The chief coded the inquiry and sent it in. He inspected the rest of the material on his desk and swept it aside.

"Nothing new," he said. "Let's go eat lunch."

Nula was looking out the window. There were several species inhabiting this planet; he could see a lot of Wodi, Gnilpi, and Ylfians. There were occasional Tibbers and Scepan. Thinking of lunch reminded him they were all herbivores. He approached the idea with resignation. Lunch. Sigh.

The chief led the way to a nearby suppergarden. They took seats at the rear where Nula would be less conspicuous and they could keep an eye on their fellow diners. The chief ordered mixed salad and broccoli. Nula surveyed the menu doubtfully and settled for nut cutlet. Perhaps he could hypnotize his stomach into thinking it was fit to eat.

No one of interest entered while they ate. They engaged in polite conversation about mutual acquaintances on the police forces of several planets and on bizarre cases they had recently heard about. They were overheard by no one except their waiter, a Scepan, who wasn't liable to be interested in animal crimes of passion, being a vegetable himself.

Nula suggested they detour past the spaceport on their way back. He was curious to see if there were any rarer species in evidence. They trudged down to the docks and watched a crew unload a freighter.

"I don't see anyone that has four legs," the chief said. He wriggled his ears discreetly towards two Jillo in the crew. "Those two wear clothes,

though."

"And they're slimy," Nula agreed. "But she said he was almost as big as me. Those little fellows are half my size. And they have scales under the slime, look there, when they twist."

"Yeah," the chief said. He looked around again. "Let's go see what the library said."

They found a short note on the chief's desk. It was a printout from the library computer. It said there existed no known four-legged slippery-skinned species of the required size and weight. It noted parenthetically that newborn wharf rats might do if a tail was permissible and if the size factor could be reduced. The chief snorted.

"Blasted smartass library clerks!"

Nula tactfully repressed a smile.

"Well, what about the picture?" the chief continued. He turned up a note from a constable. It was clipped to a drawing which depicted a rod-like structure with a knobby top. The note stated that the subject attested this to be a representation of actual size.

The chief and Nula stared at each other doubtfully.

"Um."

"Er."

"Um." Nula tried again. "Um, chief, you have a, um, Ylfian secretary. Ah, would you know anything about the size of the female sex organ of a Ylf?"

"Er!" The chief looked startled. "Oh. Well—I suppose it's distensible. But—oh, look here, this is embarrassing. I guess it's *possible*. But that victim seemed small for her species."

"She also seemed likely to exaggerate," Nula said soothingly. "But how are we going to find a person by looking for his sexual parts?"

The chief put his head in his paws. Nula succumbed. He copied the gesture.

After a comfortable night and an un-

appetizing breakfast of assorted cereals and grains, Nula returned to the chief's office. The anteroom was filled with people. The little Ylf secretary was calling names from a list. She waved Nula past with a harassed look.

"Our witnesses," the chief explained as Nula entered. "We put out a call for anyone who might have heard or seen anything in that area around the time of the assault. The constables are screening them now. If they get anything interesting they'll bring it in."

"Good idea," Nula approved. "Anything else new?"

"No, my usual load of minor crimes—robberies, yokings, altercations. A floater accident: pilot stoned on dashai. No new crimes of violence, I'm glad to say."

"I'm relieved to hear that. I was afraid this person might make a habit of it," Nula said, but thought to himself that they really couldn't presume at the frequency of the fellow's appetites. "I thought I'd wander around the docks and the market and see what I can see," he said.

"Eh?" the chief said. "You'll be the center of attraction yourself."

Nula pulled out a carrot. "I'll chew on this to make myself look harmless," he said. The chief looked doubtful. Nula stuck the carrot in his mouth like a cigar and smiled carefully with his lips hiding his teeth. The chief scratched his head.

"Maybe," he agreed. "Maybe so." But he shook his head as Nula turned to go.

Nula walked down to the marketplace. The streets were full: shoppers, tradespeople, merchants. There were kids running all over. A Wod pup came boldly up to the Tal.

"Hey, man, lemme see your choppers," the kid demanded.

Nula looked down at the urchin doubtfully.

"C'mon," the kid urged.

Nula politely removed the carrot dangling from his lips and opened his mouth as if at the dentist's. The kid shrieked in horror and ran off crying, "Mommy! Mommy!" The crowd muttered. Hostile looks were directed at the Tal. Several adult females began moving towards him.

Nula looked around. He appeared to remember an urgent errand. He walked briskly away, the carrot prominently displayed. Whew! He saw the spaceport ahead and decided to revisit the docks.

His way led him past the scene of the crime. He stopped to stand in the mouth of the alley. He walked slowly down its length. It was a thoroughly ordinary alley; he could see the marketplace from it. Nula emerged. There were a few shops in the same block: a grocery, a bookbindery, a garden supply store.

Remembering his limited breakfast, Nula decided to visit the grocery first. He looked in the window. Well-supplied with fresh fruits and vegetables, yes. Hum. Were those cans in that back corner? Maybe there's be some canned meat shipped here in error. The grocer would be happy to get rid of it. Nula went in.

He was pawing through the untidy pile of cans when the grocer returned.

"Good morning," Nula said politely.

"And a good morning to you, sir," the grocer replied. "May I help you with something?" He didn't seem surprised to see a huge Tal rooting through his stock.

Nula held up a can. "Any of these with—um—meat in them?" He felt embarrassed to ask, as though he was suggesting an illicit or obscene transaction. Blast it!

"I had some, sir," the grocer replied equitably. "Sold it all to a fellow just two days ago. Outworlder like yourself, of

course."

Nula chomped down hard on his carrot.

"Oh? Expect you meet some weird species, working this close to the port," Nula said. "Was he a Tal?"

"No, I didn't recognize the form at all. Odd-looking—hairless and pale—looked half done," the grocer chuckled. "Only had hair on his head."

Nula looked up alertly. "Four legs?"

"No, he had two legs," the grocer answered. "Tall fellow. Say, I just got back from the police station. They were asking me if I saw or heard anything unusual the other night. I didn't think of that offworlder as unusual, but. . ."

"Did he wear clothes? Artificial skins?" Nula asked.

"Yes, he did. What's this all about?"

"I'm a police officer assisting the local authorities," Nula explained. "We're looking for someone who committed an assault. The victim described a tall, slippery-skinned individual who wore clothes, but she said he had four legs."

"Hum. Well," the grocer hesitated. "This fellow had two short stunted limbs—didn't seem to be functional. He didn't walk on them at all, just balanced on his two normal legs. He did have some use of them, though—held the cans in one of them. I guess he might be a cripple."

"Do you know where he went?" Nula asked intently.

"Towards the port, that's all I can say," the grocer replied. Nula waited. "Bought all the cans I had, about ten of them. Don't suppose he'll be back, he knows I don't have any more."

Nula thanked him for his help and continued on towards the spaceport. He inquired at the other shops and of passersby but no one had noticed such an outworlder. At the port, however, one of the Jillo said he thought he knew such a person; he had admired his bright

red vest. He lived nearby in a building with a Bingham's Spirits sign on the wall.

Nula hurried on. Yes, there was the sign. It was an alcohol bar with rooms upstairs and an outside stairway. He went up. He knocked lightly on the first door, wondering if he should have called for reinforcements or carried a weapon. As a compromise he discarded his carrot.

The door opened to show a Wod housewife. Nula asked her about the outworlder.

"Oh, him," she sniffed. "Last door. Nasty species—eats meat." She took a closer look at Nula and slammed the door.

Nula thanked the closed door and proceeded. As he neared the end of the hallway he smelled it. Meat! His mouth watered. Blast!

He knocked on the door and stood back.

The creature that answered the door stood upright on two legs. He was easily the size of the Tal. He had smooth skin except for the unruly mass of red hair on his head. Nula noticed he was wearing several separate pieces of clothing. He even had thick-looking things on his feet.

"Well, howdy," the creature said.

Nula swallowed. "Hello," he managed. He wished he had called for reinforcements.

"What brings you here, friend?"

"May I see your identification?" Nula said firmly. He braced himself.

"Why sure," the creature agreed. "You from the landlord? I paid my rent." He pulled a paper from a recess in his clothes and handed it to Nula. "Here's my receipt." It was made out to Bob Johnson. Terra.

"Mister Bob Johnson of Terra?" Nula asked.

"Bobby is fine," he said agreeably.

"I'd like you to accompany me to the police station. . . ." Nula watched warily. ". . . to assist us in our investigations." "Investigations! Of what?" the Terran asked.

"A violent crime," Nula said flatly. "Will you accompany me?"

"Well, I'll be . . . okay, okay," he assented. "Always glad to do my civic duty, sure. Just let me turn off my dinner." He reached out and turned a knob on the cooker. Then he clapped a piece of woven straw on his head and turned to go with Nula. Nula looked back at the cooker longingly.

They made quite a sight. The Terran strode through the streets smiling and calling out. He called all the females honey and all the kids punkin. He stopped several times to chuck babies under the chin or scratch their ears. Nula trailed along incredulously.

The police chief heard about it before they appeared. He ushered them into his office personally and looked at Nula wide-eyed. Nula shrugged, half puzzled and half annoyed. He let the chief begin.

"Eh, Mister Bob Johnson?"

"Bobby is fine," the Terran repeated.

"Eh, we are looking for the perpetrator of a crime of violence which occurred three nights ago. A young Ylf female was attacked and raped in an alley near your residence. She described her attacker—and you fit the description," the chief said bluntly.

"What's a Ylf?" the Terran asked.

The chief rang for his secretary. She entered the office with her writing pad ready and stood waiting. The chief muttered something about waiting until later and dismissed her.

"My secretary is a Ylf," he said.

"Oh, that little pup the other night. Why, goodness, there aren't any *women* on this silly planet. A man's got to make do," Bobby explained amicably.

"You admit it?" Nula jumped in.

"Admit what?" Bobby laughed. "Screwing the dot? Sure. What's the matter? It's only an animal."

The chief's mouth hung open. Nula stared at the Terran.

Bobby looked at them blankly.

"Eh, look. Look out the window," the chief said finally. "What do you see?"

"All kinds of people—those scaly ones, those six-legged ones like you, and a whole bunch of kids and dogs," the Terran answered patiently.

"That one coming out of the orange door there—what is that?" the chief asked.

"A black and white mixed breed dog," Bobby replied. "Are you two nuts?"

The chief scratched his head. Nula turned to the Terran.

"Mister Bob Johnson, they are not dogs. They're the third of the three main kinds of people on Romir."

"Oh, pish," the Terran replied. "They look exactly like dogs. Of course they're dogs. Why, I had a trained German Shepard at home that reminded me a lot of that little bitch the other night. As I say, she was trained, though."

"But they talk!" Nula was getting angry.

"Do they? That one the other night just sort of whined." Bobby grinned.

"Take him away!" the chief ordered. Constables moved into the office and led the Terran out. "Sector Police Captain Nula, this is out of my league. I hereby turn this over to you," the chief said formally.

"No need," Nula said promptly. "His defense is going to be that by his standards the victim was an animal. If you can't convict him for rape, you can get him for bestiality."

The chief smiled happily.

—VOL HALDEMAN

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THE AMAZING INTERVIEW:

HAL CLEMENT

Conducted by Darrell Schweitzer

AMAZING: How do you go about beginning to create an imaginary, yet scientifically plausible world for a science fiction novel?

CLEMENT: My usual start is from some astronomical source. I read a news squib in *Sky And Telescope* magazine or pick up something in a book, which seems interesting. There's something peculiar about the star, and I start to wonder what sort of planets it would have, and the rest is slide-rule and calculator work for quite a long time to come. But the inspiration is generally astronomical.

AMAZING: What kind of technical knowledge do you need to do this?

CLEMENT: Well what I have is my basic astronomical knowledge. That was my major in college. I have a degree in it which is now thirty plus years old, but the basics still remain the same. You have to know the laws of celestial mechanics, the sort of factors which control how long it takes a planet to go around its star, which depends on the star's mass and its distance from the planet. You have to know enough of the laws of radiation to know what temperatures a planet of the given type would have at any given distance from the star. It's astrophysics basically, the laws of physics which apply to celestial bodies.

AMAZING: Do you ever do it by starting with a scene or visually striking planetscape, then rationalizing it?

CLEMENT: I don't usually think of

that aspect of it, no. I've done some stories which started from pictures, but that was something else again. Fred Pohl used to buy pictures which he liked, and which he thought he could use as covers, and then ship them out to writers to do a story around the picture. I did that five times, I think. But generally the spectacular side of it is there, and I'm not unaware of it, but you can make anything that's peculiar spectacular, so it's not really a very hard search.

AMAZING: Would you tell us how you constructed the planet used in *Mission of Gravity and Star Light*?

CLEMENT: The thing that drove me there was perhaps not so much the astronomical facts but my contrary nature. Every time I hear someone use the words "of course" I start wondering what would happen if that particular "of course" weren't true. During my early science fiction fandom days I read stories of planets with lots of gravity or little gravity or ordinary gravity, but there was a sort of hidden "of course" there that said in effect that you could never have very different gravitational fields or effective gravitational fields on the same planet. So I decided well it would be nice if you *could* have different gravities and I tried to find a way you can do it. From then on the sliderule came out again. The body involved happened to be available, the third whatever-it-is in the 61-Cygni system had been discovered, its orbit worked out pretty

well. It was too faint and too low in mass to be seen as a star, and no one really knew for sure at that time whether something of that mass would be a star or a planet. At the moment the likelihood seems to be that it would be closer to star than planet. Instead of having the radiation equilibrium temperatures I gave it, it would probably have its own heat. What its temperature would be I don't know, but now that we know that Jupiter is putting out several times more heat than it gets, and this thing has several times the mass of Jupiter, I suspect if I did it again I would give it some very different qualities.

AMAZING: We read about something like that recently, a body large enough to give off its own heat and support life. It just wandered around in interstellar space. Could something like that exist without a primary?

CLEMENT: Yes. There seems no reason at all to doubt it. I've written one such story myself. The present idea of how stars and planets formed is a snowballing theory, accretion theory. Material comes together, and if it has a mass on the order of the mass of the sun, it will develop central pressures and temperatures high enough to light a hydrogen fusion fire, and you have a star. If it's less than, I think present theories suggest five or six percent of the mass of the sun, then you do not get enough central temperature and pressure for hydrogen fusion. If it's much more massive than the sun you get a much brighter and hotter star. But there's no obvious reason why something couldn't accrete a very smaller mass than a star. The Earth is like that. Whether it would be Earth-like in structure—I may have taken some chances there. I assumed in the story I wrote that the

body had formed out in the Orion area which is rich in gas and dust and young stars. I assumed that it was at least a second and possibly a third generation object. That is, the material which made it had already been cycled through stars once or twice. It would therefore be rich in heavy elements. And I assumed that the thing had developed heat enough when it did come together, either from potential energy or from radioactive energy, to cook off most of the hydrogen, as took place here on the Earth, and I therefore wound up with a planet not grossly different from the Earth. Like enough so that a human being could stand the gravity; I think it was about one and a half g's. He couldn't breathe the air, which was heavily ammonia and hydrozene vapor, and the natural life was richer in nitrogen than our own. It was basically carbon life, but the liquids it used for solvents were ammonia and hydrozene.

AMAZING: If such a planet were in interstellar space, it would receive no solar radiation. Wouldn't that make a big difference?

CLEMENT: In that particular case it had star light. There were a few of the O-type stars of the Orion region within half a lightyear or so. It was too dark for my human character. The most noticeable thing in the sky aside from some very bright stars was the Orion nebula, which covered a good deal of the sky, and the fellow carried a flashlight but he had problems in using it because the lifeforms on the planet could not stand photons as energetic as he needed to see by. They saw by long wavelength stuff, infra-red light, and would get a probably fatal sunburn from a few seconds exposure to an ordinary flashlight. So my character's native friend had to

guide him, and he had to accept the guidance because he couldn't use his flashlight except under the most restricted conditions.

AMAZING: What story was this?

CLEMENT: It was called the "The Logic of Life." It appeared in Ballentine's *Stellar*.

AMAZING: When you have already created a planet, what then do you do for a story?

CLEMENT: The story is, I'm afraid, pretty much of an afterthought with me. When I have the planet pretty well worked out I think of as many non-standard things as I can think up that would happen on it, in what ways it would be different from Earth. Generally I write these things down on index cards, and when the pile of cards is high enough I begin laying them out on the floor or on a card table or something, and I try to put them into some sort of chronologically sensible order, and eventually I have a story.

AMAZING: This seems rather cut and dry. What do you do for characters?

CLEMENT: They're sort of incidental. I suspect a lot of critics will tell you that my characters aren't much to write home about. To me that's more mechanical than anything else. Something is going to happen, and if I can figure out any basic motivation for people being there at all, then the other basic motivations such as survival and curiosity will generally provide the doings of a story. I can't answer that one very well, and some people say the motivations I stick in my characters are not very sensible. In *Mission of Gravity* there is a nice economic one. They had sent x-billions of dollars of apparatus down to the high gravity region of Mesklin and the stuff had failed to lift off again, so they had a pretty good mo-

tive for at least getting their investment back. The motivation of the native was something else again, and it was part of the story, based on my personal sort of idealism, that knowledge is important to intelligent forms. I made Barlennan's sneaky activities based on his wish to get hold of alien science.

AMAZING: Do you ever try and concentrate on building up characters as personalities, asking to whom something is going to happen?

CLEMENT: Well I try to, but I don't consider that I'm very good at it. My human characters particularly don't mean very much to me. Someone like Barlennan in *Mission of Gravity*, who showed up again in *Star Light*, I have a fairly good idea of his character. I hope it's a consistent one. People who read both books can decide for themselves. He's a sort of sharp trader type, a quick deal artist. He knows what he wants and he's going out in quite a lot of directions to get it. He's not always very ethical about it by—I would have said human standards, but the human standards in that direction have been going downhill for quite a while now, so maybe that's a poor comparison.

AMAZING: Have you ever felt the inclination to write pure fantasy, in which you could construct new physical laws for a universe?

CLEMENT: The temptation has been there. The trouble is that my own tendency is to be so strongly consistent internally that I've never buckled down to the work. The moment I change one of the things I regard as a natural law, a lot of corollaries change also, and I tend to get lost in figuring out what else would have to be true before this change operated. So I've generally gotten bogged down before I did very much developing

and I've never written such a story. Maybe I'll get to it sometime.

AMAZING: Early in your career, did you ever want to write for *Unknown*?

CLEMENT: Not very strongly. *Unknown* got going just about the time I did. I was not a fantasy enthusiast at the time and I didn't begin reading *Unknown* until practically the end of its career.

AMAZING: How did you get started?

CLEMENT: Started in writing? It came rather gradually. A friend of mine introduced me to science fiction magazines when I was about ten. I started buying them when I was about twelve, and began telling the stories at boyscout campfires, and gradually feeling that I would have had things happen differently if I had written it. When I was seventeen or eighteen I began trying to write. Just bits and drabs. I didn't finish a real story. When I was nineteen I did finish one. John Campbell bought it.

AMAZING: How did John Campbell work with you to get you to bring out your abilities?

CLEMENT: In general there wasn't too much detailed work. I saw him two or three times. We would have conversations, which as was usual with John, were sometimes of a rather argumentative nature. He would point out some things which might or might not be true, and let me go on my own. I think the story which was most completely due to John Campbell was "Technical Error". He had suggested a number of strictly engineering things which might be done differently from what we do here on the Earth, and I used the old abandoned spaceship ploy in which the engineering had been done in those oddball ways, and faced my human characters with the problem of finding out how to work the thing.

AMAZING: You mean the idea was mostly his?

CLEMENT: In that particular story the specific things about bringing surfaces together, having the surfaces so thoroughly smooth that they would cling by inter-molecular forces when you brought them together, of using magnetostriction to change the shape of things so they would fit under one set of circumstances and not under another. Those were specifically John's ideas.

AMAZING: I know he often would feed out ideas to writers and tell them to write stories around them, such as when he gave Asimov the idea for "Nightfall". Did he ever approach you with anything like that?

CLEMENT: No more specifically than I've just said, the one "Technical Error." Others, it's very hard to tell how much was John Campbell because over the years I saw a fair amount of him. He'd come up to Boston every year or so, telephone a bunch of us, and we'd go over to a hotel room and shoot the breeze for a good many hours. We frequently disagreed on things, but it's really impossible for me to say now how much of a given story came out of points that were flung around at some of those discussions.

AMAZING: What was your general impression of him as an editor?

CLEMENT: He was an extremely competent man. He knew what he wanted to do and was able to do it. The success of *Astounding* and later *Analog* under his leadership seems sufficient evidence for that. I didn't always agree with him, heaven knows; very few people did. But he had his ideas and was able to carry them out. He was a good, competent man.

AMAZING: Right now are you still writing actively?

CLEMENT: I'm as active as I ever have been. Writing for me is a hobby. A highschool science teacher is my vocation. That's where I support my family and generally get my bread, you might say, without the butter. Science fiction writing and science fiction and astronomical painting provide the butter on the bread perhaps, justifying my coming to science fiction conventions and things of that sort.

AMAZING: You've done astronomical painting?

CLEMENT: Yes, I don't use my own name for the painting. I fell in love with astronomical art of the Chesley Bonestell variety years ago, but when you see the stuff at conventions, then look at the minimum bid they put on it, you drool and walk away. I eventually got tired of drooling and went out and bought myself some paints and while I never had any artistic training outside of highschool, I found that I could do planetary scenes and astronomical scenes well enough so that people would buy them. I've sold, oh, between seventy-five and eighty paintings in the last four years or so.

AMAZING: What name do you do them under?

CLEMENT: The name I use is George Richard. I don't really care who knows anymore. I started with another name because I wanted to find out if the pictures were good enough for people to buy them for their own sake, or were just going to buy them because they were by a name author.

AMAZING: Did you ever think of doing cover art for books?

CLEMENT: Not seriously. It would mean painting to a deadline, and as with the writing, the painting is strictly spare-time stuff. I don't have all that much time for it, especially

during a school year.

AMAZING: Does this ever effect your fiction? Have you ever painted a scene, then later written a story about it?

CLEMENT: I haven't done it yet, but it seems quite likely that it will happen. I have painted some scenes for the same basis that I did stories, that is, as I mentioned earlier, something that I have seen in *Sky and Telescope* magazine. I'm going to paint one at the moment from an article in *Scientific American* a few months ago on x-ray binary stars. Whether I'll do a story about it afterwards, I don't know. I've been doing a good deal of calculating just in order to make the painting reasonable. I haven't put brush on canvas yet. It's a picture I'm planning.

AMAZING: Have you ever thought of trying to arrange to do the illustrations and cover for your own work?

CLEMENT: Not seriously. It is a time question again, and if I tried to do anything of that sort it would just commit me to time I can't very well spare. I did a chapter on Jupiter for a book of Ben Bova's which he now has and I included a painting of my own of what I thought the red spot area would look like close up, and sent it on to him, but I seriously doubt he'll use it. I'm not even sure he knows it's by me. I used the George Richard name on the back of the painting.

AMAZING: It would seem that if you can paint well enough to sell paintings, this could give you complete control of the package on one of your books, rather than leaving it to some other cover artist who may or may not know what he's doing.

CLEMENT: This is true but I'm not all that sure it means that much to me. I don't worry that much about it. Some cover paintings that I've seen have

bothered me. Some have been perfectly okay. There has been one artist and only one so far, who consulted me before he finished the painting. That was Rich Sternbach who did the *If* cover for "Mistaken For Granted" a couple of years ago. Otherwise I've never had any say and no one has ever asked me, and in general the results have been all right. In some cases I have wanted to get hold of the paintings. In one case I paid a fairly stiff sum to get hold of the Kelly Freas cover paintings for *Star Light*.

AMAZING: Did you ever have a case where the cover painting was bad in a certain edition and the book didn't sell?

CLEMENT: There have been quite a variety of cover paintings, and I generally don't know if it bombed or not. There was an edition of *Needle* that had a very strange cover, quite hard to describe really, and it didn't sell me particularly, but I have no idea whether that particular printing went well or not. *Cycle of Fire* was just reissued by Ballentine and Judy Lynn did send me a proof of the painting after it had been bought and the plates made and everything, and asked if I liked it—which I did. It was a very nice painting. I hope I can get my fingers on that original sometime. I can't think of any which I really regarded as bad.

AMAZING: How do you feel about interior illustrations for something? Does this aid the reader in building up a mental picture of the story, or does it hinder it?

CLEMENT: I'm sure it aids it. The amount of aid would vary enormously from one person to another. Some people may get their visualisations from my words before they turn to the page that has the picture on it, and they might get quite jolted. But

that's a matter of not who's right, but who communicated better.

AMAZING: On occasion you have done stories which had nothing to do with astronomy. What, for example, moved you to write *Ocean On Top*?

CLEMENT: That was one of the stories that Fred Pohl bought as a cover and asked me to do. He had purchased a painting, a fairly traditional undersea thing with a big domed city in the background, and a couple of scuba-armored figures swimming around in the foreground with bubbles coming out of them. He sent me a photostat of the painting, black and white; he put red pencil around the two swimming figures, cutting out the city, and said he wanted to print this much of the picture upside down with the bubbles going down, and can you write me a story Hal?

AMAZING: And you wrote an entire novel around that cover?

CLEMENT: Well, this was a little of a surprise. I had a two week spring vacation coming up, and I said, sure I'll try it at maybe ten thousand words, but the thing kept growing on me. It overran spring vacation by a week or two, and wound up at a little over fifty thousand, which was novel length. I think Fred was a little surprised. I'm not sure even to this day whether he bought it because he liked it or because he thought he was stuck with it. It was several years before anybody bought the book rights to it. I admit I was experimenting in several ways at once in that story, and I'm willing to admit that the experiments were not wholly successful. It's far from being my favorite among my own work.

AMAZING: Do you ever find yourself having written a story, maybe many years ago, that now you would rather bury?

CLEMENT: There are some that I don't think much of. As I look back—my memory is not nearly what it used to be—there are none which I would—no I'll take that back. There is one juvenile novel I did under contract to a publisher who promptly failed after he put it out, and if no one ever mentions that one again I'd be just as happy. Since very few people know about it, it's all right.

AMAZING: Was it under your own name, or a pseudonym?

CLEMENT: It was under the Clement pseudonym.

AMAZING: Why have you so consistently used the Clement pseudonym?

CLEMENT: Well I kept using it because it had commercial value eventually. I used it originally because when I sold my first story to John Campbell I was an undergraduate at Harvard, I had done a couple of articles for *Sky And Telescope* magazine, which at that time was published at Harvard Observatory, and I was a little leery about the possible reactions of the director of the place, Harlow Shapley, and my faculty advisor Donald Menzel, to the possibility of having the same name appear in their dignified astronomical publication and in a pulp magazine. By the time I found out that they both tried to write science fiction themselves and wouldn't have minded in the least, Hal Clement was a name to stay with.

AMAZING: Did you ever have any problem with science fiction not being respectable? You know, hiding it in a plain brown wrapper and all that?

CLEMENT: It was never a problem. I don't think my parents thought much of it, but they certainly didn't react to it as they would have if it had been a copy of *Spicy Detective*, which in those days was regarded as pretty bad. No, they let me go my own way

in that respect. I think my father wanted me to be a minister, but he settled on my going into science, and admitted many years later that I'd done the right thing. So, no I never had to hide the magazine. As clearly as I can remember I was in grammar school when I began buying them regularly, and I would go up during lunch hour to the drugstore a few blocks away and if the new *Wonder Stories* had come in I would buy it and bring it back to school. My teachers may not have approved, but none of them ever tried to take it away from me or suggest that I ought to buy something of higher quality for my two bits.

AMAZING: Well that's unusual. That happened to me when I was in high-school, and that was 1970.

CLEMENT: Not all teachers are that narrow, I like to believe, being a highschool teacher myself.

AMAZING: Then how do you feel about the current academic interest in science fiction?

CLEMENT: It's good in a way. It's nice to be respectable I suppose. I'm not quite so happy with some of the people who have popped into it and set themselves up as science fiction experts. Ben Bova's editorial on that subject a few months ago, I think, covers the point much better than I can. There are people teaching science fiction courses who are not really aware that anyone ever lived except Poe and Verne.

AMAZING: Do you think this is because they don't think science fiction requires such rigorous scholarship? For example, if you walked into a psychology department and said "Hey, I've just read *Walden Two*. I want to teach a course in behaviorism," they would laugh you right out again. But apparently in sci-

ence fiction people have been able to do just that.

CLEMENT: This is because we are so early in the field in a time of respectability that no one is quite sure what constitutes professional competence, and there are a lot of departments who feel that your established professional competence in general literature means more than x years of experience as a science fiction fan. Not all of them feel that way but quite a few of them apparently do.

AMAZING: Have you been approached to teach a science fiction course or speak at one?

CLEMENT: Yes. Both. I was asked in the highschool where I teach last year if I would take on a science fiction course for a term, and I said I was for it in principle if they could find the time in my schedule, which they could not. Then for about three years I taught an evening course in science fiction at a very small college in my home town. The take wasn't very great: there were never very many people in the course, and they didn't offer it again this year, and I was just as happy because it can kill one evening a week very very dead with all the preparation that had to be done. I've spoken quite often to school groups on science fiction. Only last week I drove from Boston to a town in Pennsylvania where I spent the entire day at a school, where they are teaching science fiction courses. I addressed four different classes in science fiction courses, one in a literature and other arts course, and cleaned up the day by talking to the local science fiction club.

AMAZING: What is your impression of these classes? Do they ask you intelligent questions, or do they ask the usual run of clichés?

CLEMENT: My experience has been

that they tend to be pretty imaginative. The clichés are there of course. You can never get rid of them, and some of the questions are standard, but even though they are standard I still wouldn't call them clichés. A highschool kid asking what gives you ideas or how do you build up a story is a perfectly legitimate and sensible question, and the fact that I have had to answer it many times before doesn't reflect on the questioner. He hasn't heard my answer.

AMAZING: Are you generally pleased with the direction science fiction is taking now?

CLEMENT: Generally. Yes, there are some aspects of it which I have never been able to get enthusiastic about, the so called "new wave" never sent me very much. I'm essentially old-fashioned. I still like space opera. In a sense that's what I write.

AMAZING: No two people ever really agreed on what the "new wave" is or was. What's your working definition?

CLEMENT: I never really worked out a verbal definition of it either. It was science fiction stories in which people got very, very involved with personality crises, or identity crises. They were more psychological than physical in their science. And without wanting to belittle the importance of the psychological sciences, I'm not sure they're well enough developed to justify writing stories about them in which you can say it really would have happened this way.

AMAZING: Can you ever say that about anything?

CLEMENT: You can come a lot closer. You can at least calculate reliably what the gravity of a planet with a given mass and radius is going to be. You can calculate reliably what its temperature is going to be if you know how far it is from what kind of

star. I agree that beyond that you've got to have human behavior among your characters, but some of the types of behavior that turned up in the so-called "new wave" were built so far out on scaffoldings of psychological speculation that they lost their believability in many cases.

AMAZING: Do you still recognise these as science fiction then?

CLEMENT: Yes, you get to the point where I would hesitate to call them science fiction. There are some very good stories, not "new wave" by any sense of the word, which are to my feeling not science fiction either. Most of what Ray Bradbury has written, his *The Martian Chronicles* for example, was as unscientific as one could get. Ray knows this perfectly well and doesn't care. I admire him beyond words as a master of the story-teller's craft, but I don't think what he writes is science fiction in my admittedly rather narrow and old fashioned idea of what that means.

AMAZING: Do you think it is detrimental to the field to stuff science fiction anthologies full of stories which are not science fiction? Will this lose readership?

CLEMENT: I can't tell what will lose readership. Any story which a certain editor felt was good, presumably a number of readers are going to feel is good. I don't see why having a wide variety of stories in an anthology is going to hurt it. I should think it would almost have to help it. You would hope that any reader will realize that if there are ten different stories in the book he is probably not going to like all of them, and why worry about it? It's a matter of subjective tastes there.

AMAZING: What are your subjective tastes in science fiction? What writers do you admire?

CLEMENT: I like Larry Niven, at least when he's out in space. I like Poul Anderson very much. Those are two names which immediately jump to mind. But they're both the hard science fiction types, as close to the old style space opera as you can get.

AMAZING: Do you find that the old style space opera holds up on rereading?

CLEMENT: Yes. I still reread Doc Smith, Jack Williamson's *Legion of Space*, and stories of that sort, and I still enjoy them.

AMAZING: Wouldn't you agree though that the modern writers of the same sort write with considerably more skill and sophistication? I would say that Larry Niven has beat Smith at his own game.

CLEMENT: That's probably a fair statement. Larry knows more astronomy than Doc did. Smith had his Ph.D in chemistry, not astronomy. I'm not sure that beyond that he is a better writer. There are a lot of faults which can be held against E.E. Smith at this point. They talk about his cardboard characters and that sort of thing. Well I don't know. He had mastered the art of knowing how to keep things happening in the story. He kept and can still keep a reader's attention, and this is the essential of the craft.

AMAZING: Were you ever disturbed by his apparent inability to get his heroes into danger? For example, at the end of *Galactic Patrol* he resolves everything by putting Kinnerson in bulletproof armor and sending him in to shoot up the bad guys. This is not my idea of meaningful conflict.

CLEMENT: If you're implying there was no danger, I don't think you have analysed the situation very well. His character had protected himself as well as he could against the foresee-

able dangers, but he knew perfectly well that there were others he might not have been able to foresee, and if I had been in his position, and I have been in comparable positions, I'm sure I would have been just as scared.

AMAZING: I couldn't believe in the character well enough to care.

CLEMENT: As I said, the Smith characters have been criticised. As far as I'm concerned they never bothered me very much. I may be a little bit of a mid-Victorian idealist myself. Feelings like love and courage and loyalty which are downgraded by a lot of people nowadays still mean a great deal to me.

AMAZING: What about his inability to write dialogue the way people talk?

CLEMENT: The way people talk *when*? Styles of what is cliché and what is sensible talk have varied enough during my lifetime so that I am extremely aware of them. It seems to me that many of the conversations which have been belittled in *Galactic Patrol* or *Second Stage Lensman* are perfectly sensible, making allowance for the way the people would feel at that time. I know I wouldn't talk that way right now, certainly not to someone twenty or twenty-five years younger than I am, but I can conceive of situations in which I would talk that way. And quite possibly I do,

and although I'm not aware of being laughed at behind my back, I am aware that my attitude on such things is quite a long way from being up to date.

AMAZING: Did you ever feel inclined to design a future idiom for a story?

CLEMENT: Not to any great extent. I have sometimes invented a term or two which will apply to the situation, but if there is anything that is unpredictable, I'd say it would be slang.

AMAZING: What areas of the sciences which you are familiar with seem to provide the most exciting possibilities for speculation?

CLEMENT: Astronomy and astrophysics still, especially the far-out part of it, cosmology, what quasars are and so on. Biochemistry and the details we're picking up on that. Those I would say are the two most prominent sources for the imagination.

AMAZING: Have you ever thought of writing in the biological area?

CLEMENT: I did. It was called "The Mechanic". It appeared in *Analog* about 1966 and was in a collection of my stuff called *Small Changes* which came out from Doubleday about 1969.

AMAZING: Thank you.

—Conducted by
DARRELL SCHWEITZER

ON SALE NOW IN FEB. FANTASTIC

A BIG ALL STAR ISSUE—THE FIGURINE by L. SPRAGUE DE CAMP, JUDAS STORY by BRIAN M. STABLEFORD, RED RIVER LIES DROWNING by C. L. GRANT, RE-ENTRY by BARRY N. MALZBERG, THE APPRENTICE by DAVE BISCHOFF, BURIED SILVER by DENNIS MORE, THE FANTASTIC INTERVIEW: LIN CARTER conducted by DARRELL SCHWEITZER, and many other new stories and features.

Alec's Anabis (cont. from page 14)
turned to the messenger. "Speak then."

The man stepped forward. "Ariaeus has sent me to warn you that there is a body of Tissaphernes's troops ensconced in the forest with orders to attack the Greek forces. He also wishes me to advise you to post a guard on the bridge over the Tigris, as Tissaphernes plans to demolish it during the night."

Neither Proxenus nor Xenophon made an immediate answer. Suddenly Xenophon looked in Alec's direction with dark eyes that contained particles of starlight. "What is your judgment in the matter, peltast?"

Hiding his astonishment, Alec approached the two young men, one of whom was soon to die and the other of whom would someday set down his own version of the words he was about to hear. "I consider the message to be self-contradictory," Alec said, instinctively employing the dialect Xenophon had asked the question in—Attic. "If the Persians hidden in the forest should attack us and force us to retreat, it will be to their advantage if we retreat across the bridge and into the arms of the rest of Tissaphernes's forces. So what advantage would a demolished bridge give them? If, on the other hand, we should be victorious and force them to retreat, they will need the bridge themselves."

There was a short silence. Then, "Who are you, peltast?" Xenophon asked.

"Alexander the Lacedaemonian."

The Athenian's eyes seemed to gather more particles of starlight. "You will please accompany us to the tent of Clearchus. It is his responsibility to decide what should be done in this matter."

Four of the *dramatis personae* were already present in Clearchus's tent—Clearchus himself, Agias, Menon and Socrates—and the entry of Xenophon, Proxenus, Alec and the messenger raised the total to eight. There was yet another player, one whom only Alec could see. He wore a black cowl and his name was Thanatos. First he would hover behind Clearchus, then behind Agias, then behind Menon, then behind Socrates and then behind Proxenus.

Xenophon had the messenger repeat what he had said at the arms pile. Then he had Alec repeat what he had said. Clearchus listened attentively to both men. When they finished he went into a brown study, mentally sorting through the data accumulated during thirty years of military campaigns. Finally he said, "I do not think that there is a body of Tissaphernes's troops hidden in the forest. I think that Tissaphernes, employing Ariaeus as a tool, is trying to dissuade us from demolishing the bridge by threatening to demolish it himself, thereby implying that he wants it demolished. For if we did demolish it, we would have for defenses the river Tigris on one side and the canal on the other, and simultaneously we would obtain for ourselves an excellent refuge abounding in all the provisions we would need. It is clear that Tissaphernes has not been to Greece, else he would realize that the Ten Thousand would never dream of remaining in this wretched country one moment longer than is absolutely necessary. I think it is safe to conclude that the bridge is not endangered, but we will post a guard upon it in the unlikely event that it is."

Clearchus proved to be right: no attempt was made to demolish the

bridge, and no attack materialized. After an uneventful night, the Greeks crossed the Tigris and were rejoined by Ariaeus, Tissaphernes and Orontes. The march through Media was resumed, and ten days later the armies encamped near the Assyrian village of Adanti, the birthplace of Cyrus's mother, Parysatis. Tissaphernes, to show his contempt for Cyrus, declared the village in bounds and told the Greeks to help themselves to anything and anyone they wanted.

IV

Jait-Jbit

STILL SMARTING from "Duris the Boeotian's" snide remark, Alec resolved to get as much of the forthcoming action on pasttape as possible, and shortly after dusk set out for the village with his buddy Pasion. He also had another reason for visiting the village: to find a home for Sarai.

He had been sleeping beside her all this while in old Anytus's wagon, and increasingly of late he had found himself wide awake and gazing up at the stars when he should have been dead to the world. He was at a loss to explain his insomnia, but was certain it derived at least in part from the responsibility incurred by her presence on the march.

It was his intention to try to get on the good side of one of the Assyrian families by protecting them from the marauding Greeks. Judging from the shouting and the screaming already in progress, there should be no end of opportunities.

The shouting and the screaming increased both in frequency and in volume as he and Pasion neared the outlying houses. In places, torchlight alleviated the deepening darkness, and in the vacillating radiance Greek sol-

diers could be seen dashing in and out of doorways and bearing off girls, barley-wine and comestibles, in that order of importance.

A terrified girl ran past Alec and Pasion, veered right, and disappeared among a small grove of trees. A moment later, a drunken Greek appeared, looking wildly this way and that. Alec, tempted to crack the man over the head with the shaft of his javelin, did the next best thing and pointed in the direction opposite to that the girl had gone in. Her pursuer took the bait, but Alec's act of chivalry did her no good, for Pasion, when Alec made no move to do so, took after her himself.

Disgusted, Alec continued on alone. The starlit street in which he presently found himself was a place of moving shapes and shadows, harsh laughter, shouts and screams. He passed through a shoulder-wide alley to a second street, found a similar scene with an almost identical soundtrack. A second alley brought him to a third street just in time to see a figure dodge into the entrance of a house across the way.

The house, although one-storied and flat-roofed like all the others, had an air of opulence about it that its neighbors lacked. Moreover, it seemed to say, "Yes, Sarai would be happy here."

He crossed the street and stepped through the entrance (the house, like many such Assyrian dwellings, had no doors). Finding himself in a pitch-black hallway, he felt his way along the right wall till he came to a heavily curtained archway. Boldly, he drew the curtain aside.

Before him lay a large room hung with rich tapestries depicting lion hunts, and dimly illuminated by the glowing coals of a brazier that stood in

the center of the floor. Beyond the brazier lay four empty pallets, and huddled against the wall beyond them were three figures. A fourth figure—that of an adult male—stood just to the right of the archway and was in the process of bringing a heavy staff down upon Alec's head.

Alec caught the blow on his shield and knocked the staff from the man's hands. Then, noting his attacker's Assyrian attire and deducing that he was the head of the house, he herded him across the room to where the three figures were huddled against the wall. One of them was that of a woman in her thirties, one of a girl in her mid-teens, and one of a boy around ten.

The head of the house had dropped to his knees and was talking rapidly in a tongue similar to Sarai's. He was not a rich man, he said, but Alec was welcome to everything he owned, so long as he did not harm his wife and children. "I've no intention of harming anybody," Alec said, "so stop groveling and stand up." When the man obeyed, he told him about Sarai. "If you'll agree to adopt her and will promise to treat her as though she were your own child, I promise to protect both you and your house till the Greeks depart."

"It will be done! It will be done!"

"I'll bring her here tomorrow. Now go to bed and get some sleep." He seized the teenaged girl's arm. "Not you," he said. "I want you beside me."

He sat down with his back against the wall and pulled her down beside him. When she shrank away from him, he assured her that she had nothing to fear. He kept his shield attached to his left arm and rested his javelin across his knees. Let the Greeks come—he was ready for them.

The night began to drag. Occasion-

ally, soldiers tramped past in the street, laughing and singing. They were probably foraging by this time, having satiated their more immediate appetites. When, around midnight, two of them came stumbling down the hallway and drew the curtain, Alec was waiting for them just within the archway, one arm around the girl to show them his intentions were no more honorable than theirs, the other gripping his javelin to demonstrate that he had no intentions of sharing his oasis.

They were so drunk they nearly fell into the room. "Ho, Simmias," one of them said, "we have blundered into the abode of a peltast." "Let us begone," said the other, and they staggered back out into the street.

Alec drew the curtain, crossed the room, reattached his shield to his left arm and sat back down against the wall. The girl sat down next to him without having to be told. She no longer shrank from him, he noticed. As a matter of fact, she was beginning to shrink toward him. She looked a little like his kid sister. The way Marianne used to look when she was that age. All of a sudden he found himself hating the Ten Thousand, hating all the armies that had gone before them and all the armies that would come after; all masses of men, in short, who, the moment law and order disappeared, behaved like apes. Toward morning, by which time the girl had shrunk so close to him that her head was lying on his shoulder, he found himself hating himself.

He was new to this kind of assignment. His previous ones had involved relatively tame pastevents, such as the Signing of the Declaration of Independence, The Boston Tea Party and The Landing of the Pilgrims on Plymouth Rock. He had enjoyed

pasttaping The Landing immensely, and afterward he had talked YoreCo into letting him pasttape the Pilgrims' first winter in the New World. The Pilgrims' First Winter had been a box-office fiasco, but Alec had loved it, and before YoreCo withdrew it from the closed-circuit networks he viewed it seventeen times.

Toward morning, a faint rustling sound brought him out of a fitful sleep. The coals in the brazier had long since turned to ashes, but dawn showed through a high window on the streetside wall, and the room was filled with gray light. A burly figure stood in the archway—the figure of a peltast, javelin drawn back for the cast.

Alec gripped his own javelin and jaited.

"JAITING", although it came under the general heading of time travel, was in actuality a defense mechanism that had taken root in the human psyche somewhere in the late 1950's. It attained full growth shortly after the second *fin de siècle* when the electricars that were inundating the market became more numerous than the internal combustion species they had supplanted. They were nowhere near as mighty as their predecessors, but their numbers more than compensated for their individual puniness, and the full- and part-time pedestrians who had begun to breathe easier saw suddenly that the war they thought they'd won had only just begun.

The first pedestrian to jait was a harried businessman in Ashtabula, O, who, absent-mindedly crossing the street a second after the light changed, found himself in the path of two electricars, one bearing down on him from his left and the other from

his right. They, no doubt, would manage to miss each other, but neither could possibly miss him, and for him to jump forward or backward in space would merely put him fully in the path of either. Forward or backward in space, yes—but not forward or backward in time. It is improbable that he reasoned this out before he jaited, but jait he did, rematerializing in the same spot approximately forty-eight hours later when the light, fortuitously, was green. He then finished crossing the street and, albeit dazed and disbelieving, jumped back intime—"jbited"—as effortlessly as he had jumped forward in it. The round trip consumed slightly more than two seconds—1.0625 to jait and 1.0625 to jbit.

A rash of similar occurrences swept the U.S. and, ultimately, the whole world. Awakened to the fact that they were no longer prisoners of time, the human race proceeded to perfect their new ability to a point where they could jait-jbit at will. The average "jump-range" was forty-eight hours; generally the jaiter could sustain his presence in the future for about fifty minutes; after that, if he didn't jbit voluntarily, he was automatically catapulted back to the moment he had jaited from, plus 2.1250 seconds.

Horse racing languished and died out. Bookies jumped off the roofs of ten-story buildings. OTB parlors were converted into pool halls. The Dow Jones Index rose to an alltime high, fell to an all-time low.

Learned men everywhere put on their thinking caps. Learned papers began deluging learned journals. There were lengthy extrapolations of Godel's world-lines, endless explorations of quantum mechanics, and interminable excursions into the field of

extra-dimensional electromagnetic emanations. But for the most part the learned papers merely served to demonstrate that the learned men who wrote them knew no more about the nature of jait-jbiting than the rest of the jait-jbiters did.

One theory was advanced, however, that held at least a teaspoonful of water. It derived from Kant's Transcendental Aesthetic, and proposed that when a person jaited he unconsciously freed himself from his *a priori* interpretation of reality and—still unconsciously—moved to a different point in the noumenon. When he jbited, he simply reversed his steps.

REMATERIALIZING in the room some forty-eight hours in the future, Alec found the four members of the Assyrian family sleeping peacefully on their pallets. "Duris the Boeotian" was nowhere to be seen.

Alec's first thought was for the safety of the family. To ensure that none of them would be accidentally injured, he left the room, ran down the hallway and out into the street.

In doing so, he did exactly what "Duris" had figured he would do. The PastCo agent, having a shorter-than-average jump-range, had jaited, left the house and stationed himself just to the right of the entrance. But in his eagerness to jab Alec with his javelin, he jabbed too soon. The point missed its mark and only grazed Alec's leathern vest.

Alec jbited and leaped to the left the moment he rematerialized. But "Duris" had again outmaneuvered him. The PastCo agent had jbited a split-second earlier and had rematerialized a split-second sooner and was there waiting for Alec to arrive. Moreover, when he jabbed with his

javelin he jugged to the right (Alec's left) of where Alec had been, Alec's shield saved him this time, but not altogether: in deflecting the jab he lost his balance and fell flat on his back.

During the fleeting second before he jaited he tried to think what his next move would be if he were "Duris" and had a shorter-than-average jump-range. He thought he knew.

Re-arriving in the future, he jbited the moment he became visible; then he got to his feet and ran around to the back of the house. He tossed his shield aside, pulled himself up onto the roof of an adjoining shed and from there gained the roof of the house proper. He walked across it to the front of the house and stationed himself just behind the spot where he estimated "Duris" would be. Then he jaited.

He rematerialized some three feet behind "Duris's" broad back. The PastCo agent was staring disbelievingly down into the street where, a few moments ago, a decoy in the form of his opponent had appeared, only to disappear a split-second after he cast his javelin. The javelin, its point buried deep in the hard-packed earth, marked the spot where the decoy had been.

Alec brought the shaft of his own javelin down on "Duris's" helmet with all his might, and the agent-assassin went tumbling off the roof. Halfway to the ground, unconsciousness annulled his future reality, and he vanished.

After descending from the roof, Alec retrieved his shield and returned to the street. "Duris" was lying on his back and was out cold. Alec contemplated him for some time. If ever a *coup de grace* was in order, one was now, but he was utterly incapable of

delivering it. Justified or not, such an act would still amount to murder.

He examined "Duris's" limbs, hopeful that one of them, at least, had been broken. None had. His back, then? Alec didn't think so. Nor his neck either. Some problems solve themselves; some, you can solve; others, you have to carry with you wherever you go. Alec sighed. Then, employing the thong he used for slinging his javelin, he bound the agent-assassin's wrists tightly together. Clustered in the doorway of the house, the Assyrian family, awakened probably by the girl, watched with wide eyes.

Suddenly "Duris" gasped and sat up. He stared uncomprehendingly up at Alec's face. Alec smiled benignly down on him. He waited till the man's eyes cleared, then, "You have two choices," he said. "You can jait, and gamble that you can get your hands free before I show up and kill you, or you can accompany me back to camp, where I promise to release you, and where you can start explaining to your captain what became of your javelin, and also, since it doesn't appear to be anywhere in the present, what happened to your shield."

"Duris" got slowly to his feet. Several deep breaths were enough to restore the wind that had been knocked from his lungs but fell far short of restoring the wind that had been knocked out of his sails. "You're a fool," he said without conviction.

"Next time I won't be. You can count on it."

"Duris" said no more. A trumpet sounded in the distance, and the two men headed back to camp.

v

Harassment

"I REFUSE TO GO," Sarai declared.
ALEC'S ANABIS

"I am not an old shoe that you can cast aside without a moment's notice!"

"But I'm not casting you aside," Alec said desperately. "I've found a home for you."

"Well, I am not going to live in it!"

The sun was climbing into the blue morning sky. The Greek army was preparing to march. The camp-followers were reloading their wagons. Not only was there no time to argue, Alec, who in addition to having been up all night had had no breakfast either, was disinclined to. Slinging Sarai over his shoulder, he set out once more for the village of Adanti.

Immediately she began to kick and scream. The camp-followers interrupted their preparations to watch the show. Attracted by the screams, half a dozen scrawny dogs converged on Alec and began harassing his heels. Despite all this, he probably would have been able to keep his temper if, just as he entered the encompassing fields, Sarai hadn't got free.

How she managed it, he had no idea. One moment she was lying across his shoulder; the next she was lying on the ground before him; and the next she was up and running back toward the camp of the camp-followers.

He took after her and tackled her. Angrily, he pulled her to her feet and began shaking her. A wave of raucous laughter came from the camp of the camp-followers, augmenting his anger, and he continued shaking her. Then, to his consternation, he found himself kissing her.

She kissed him back. Repeatedly. At last he came to his senses and drew away. He let go of her arms. Somehow, standing there before him, her eyes faintly misted, she no longer reminded him quite so much of his kid sister. Moreover, he had badly

underestimated her age. She appeared to be seventeen, rather than sixteen. In fact, she might even be eighteen. Maybe even nineteen.

Could she possibly be twenty-one?

Angry once again, this time at the direction of his thoughts, he seized her wrist. "Come on!"

She said not a word as he led her over the fields to the village. Only when the Assyrian family ran to meet them did she break her silence. "Take me with you, Alexander—please!"

He saw that she was crying, and for a moment he weakened. But the problem that her presence on the march had posed before was as nothing to the problem it would pose now. "I'm sorry," he said brusquely, "but I can't. Goodby, Sarai."

He turned quickly and walked away. "It is not that you can't, it is that you are afraid!" she called after him. Then she began to cry again, and he walked as fast as he could to escape the sound of her sobs. The morning mist should have dissipated long ago, yet it continued to rise round him, making it difficult to see. It occurred to him to wipe his eyes, and when he did so, the mist disappeared.

A FIVE DAYS' MARCH brought the Cyreian forces and their escort to the river Zabatus. Camp was made, and Clearchus, concerned over his men's increasing distrust of the Persians, arranged a meeting with Tissaphernes. After Clearchus outlined the situation Tissaphernes proposed that a second meeting be held and that all the Greek officers attend it so that the problem could be discussed more fully. Clearchus agreed. Some of the other Greek generals, however, were skeptical, and when the time came only Menon, Proxenus, Socrates and

Agias, plus some twenty captains, accompanied him. The execution took place in Tissaphernes's tent. It was swift and efficient. After the five generals lay dead, the twenty captains who had waited outside were systematically massacred.

When the news reached the Greek camp, the Greeks panicked, officers and "enlisted men" alike.

Except Xenophon.

But, strictly speaking, Xenophon was neither. The Athenian, or so it was said, had joined the Greek mercenaries at the behest of his friend Proxenus and against the wishes of his tutor Socrates. While generally looked upon as an officer, he had never received an official appointment.

It was he who confronted Ariaeus, Artaozus and Mithridates when they rode into the camp of the demoralized Greeks at the head of a detachment of cavalry and demanded that the Ten Thousand lay down their arms. Only Clearchus, Agias and Socrates had been executed, they said. Proxenus and Menon had been spared and would eventually be freed. Xenophon, who knew better, demanded that they be freed at once.

Ariaeus, Artaozus and Mithridates, who had expected instant compliance, blinked. "The King will not take kindly to this," Ariaeus said.

"I did not intend that he should."

Again, the three Persians blinked. Then, angrily, they wheeled their horses and rode off at the head of their horsemen.

That night Xenophon convened the surviving generals in his tent. "Why is it," he asked, "that men become blind when they most need to see?"

"It is true that we are stranded leaderless in a hostile country," he continued. "But leaders can be replaced, and were we not stranded be-

fore this terrible thing occurred? And consider: Before, we did not know for certain who our enemies were: now we do. Before, we were parties to a truce that forbade us to rape the land: now the truce has been violated and we can take anything we need. Granted, we no longer have guides; but could worse guides be found than those we had?

"Now, you are probably thinking, 'Yes, but we are surrounded by two forces—the armies of Ariaeus as well as the armies of Tissaphernes.' But were we not similarly surrounded before? And is it sensible to fear the armies of Tissaphernes, which we ourselves put to rout, and is it any more sensible to fear the armies of Ariaeus, which put *themselves* to rout? The tragic deaths of Clearchus and the others are to be regretted, but we have merely to tear aside the veil that fear has blinded us with to see that Tissaphernes's treachery has bettered, not worsened, our plight."

Morale was restored. That same night, new generals were appointed: Timasion of Troy to replace Clearchus, Xanthicles of Achaia to replace Socrates, Cleanor of Arcadia to replace Agias, Philisius of Achaia to replace Menon, and Xenophon of Athens to replace Proxenus. New captains were appointed also. One of them was "Alexander of Lacedaemon".

Alec's initial astonishment when a messenger brought him the news was as nothing compared to his subsequent astonishment when Xenophon summoned him to his tent and informed him he was to be his aide. He was delighted as well as astonished. As the Athenian's aide, he would be able to pasttape the author-hero of the *Anabasis-Katabasis* practically twenty-four hours a day.

Overwhelmed, he said, "But why, Xenophon? Why, with so many seasoned officers to choose from, did you choose someone like myself? Only a few short moments ago I was a mere peltast."

Xenophon, resplendent in brand new military grab that he must have packed all the way from Athens, smiled. "For the same reason I saw to it that you were appointed *locharch*. Because you can think. I saw this at once at the arms pile at Sitace. Most of the other captains and a large number of the generals, I regret to say, cannot. Oh, they think they can. But what they actually do is reshape reality to accord with the specifications of their predilections. It will be good having someone at my side who can distinguish between a javelin with a point and one with a hook. I shall expect you in my tent at sunrise."

Alec thanked him and left. As he was making his way toward his and Pasion's tent, a faint *click* came from his helmet ridge, informing him that micro-tape cartridge no. 3 had run its course. He replaced it by starlight, after ascertaining no one was in the immediate vicinity. The cartridge case now contained three-fifths of the raw material for pastacular Y-709, tentatively titled "The Trek of the Ten Thousand".

It occurred to him that it might not be proper for a captain to sleep in the same tent with a peltast. He decided that he didn't much care whether it was or not, and when he reached the tent he crawled in beside the Arcadian, who was already asleep, and laid aside his helmet, which he hadn't bothered to put back on. He closed his eyes.

Now that he no longer had Sarai to worry about, he expected to get a good night's sleep for a change. In

this, he was thwarted. Something kept creeping up to the back doorway of his mind every time he dozed off, and ringing the doorbell; then running away when he opened the door. It kept harassing him all night, and he was wide awake when the trumpet sounded reveille, the identity of his caller still unknown.

Xenophon convened the generals, both the old and the new, and proposed that all tents and carriages be burned to expedite the retreat. He also proposed that the Ten Thousand march in square formation with the camp-followers and baggage-cattle in their midst. Three days march to the north, he said, was a large village named Diessa where provisions could be obtained.

The Greek army had no sooner crossed the Zabatus than Mithridates, heading a sizeable body of cavalry and a detachment of bowmen, began harassing the two *taxeis* commanded by Xenophon that comprised the Greeks' rear. Lacking cavalry of his own, Xenophon was unable to retaliate, so that night he augmented his *taxeis* with half a hundred horsemen and a company of slingers. The next morning Mithridates, upon receiving a dose of his own medicine, dropped back.

The line of march began bordering the east bank of the Tigris. After the Greek army passed the deserted city of Mespila, Tissaphernes staged an attack that, thanks to the accuracy of Xenophon's slingers, got nowhere. Arriving in Diessa, the Greeks loaded up with provisions and pressed on. On the fifth day of the march they entered a range of hills, where they were harassed by Tissaphernes. Tissaphernes continued his harassment tactics on the plain beyond, entered the foothills of the Carduchian moun-

tains and occupied a height below which the Greeks, hemmed in by the Tigris on their left, would have to pass. Xenophon, however, foiled him by occupying the height just above, whereupon Tissaphernes, typically, fled.

The mountains loomed closer and closer on the Greeks' right. Inevitably, river and mountains met, and they found themselves in a *cul de sac*, the river being too deep to ford and the mountains, at this point, being too precipitous to cross. Perceiving their predicament, Tissaphernes attacked, but he was too overcautious to take full advantage of the situation and the Greeks managed to break through his lines and retreat southward. Safe for the moment, they settled down in a group of deserted villages and licked their wounds.

Again Xenophon convened the generals. He outlined the situation for them. Babylonia and Media lay to the south, Susa and Ecbatana to the east, Lydia and Ionia to the west, and Armenia to the north. To proceed in the direction of Susa and Ecbatana would mean going the long way around; to proceed in the direction of Lydia and Ionia would necessitate fording the river, a virtually impossible task; while to proceed in the direction of Albania would involve crossing the Carduchian mountains and coping with the savage Carduchi.

It was finally decided that an attempt should be made to cross the mountains. If it was successful, the Tigris could be forded near its source. Two wild boars and an ass were sacrificed. From their marmoreal palace high on the shining slopes of Olympus, the gods watched the weary Greeks reform their ranks and move out. If they were propitiated, they gave no sign.

XENOPHON'S *Anabasis* says that after the Greeks surmounted the first summits, the Carduchi deserted their villages in the windings and recesses below, and fled.

Afterward, however, the savage mountain people reorganized and attacked the descending Greeks from the rear, killing and wounding a large number of Xenophon's men.

Half the baggage-cattle were abandoned in an effort to augment the army's mobility. After filing through a narrow pass, the Greeks entered a second sequence of hills. There were a number of minor skirmishes, but for the most part the Carduchi seemed to be biding their time. Toward evening, a wind sprang up, and the temperature began to drop. Sometime during the night, rain began to fall. It was still falling when the Greeks rolled out of their sodden blankets and confronted the new day.

The march was resumed. The rain continued to fall, and showed no sign of abating. The Carduchi confined their activities to harassing the Greeks' rearmost *taxeis*, and more of Xenophon's men were killed and wounded. That night, the Athenian brought before the other generals two Carduchi whom his men had captured. The other generals interrogated the two prisoners separately. They asked the first whether he knew of another route that the Greeks might follow. When he said No, he was decapitated in the presence of the second. When asked the same question, the second answered, "Yes, I know of such a route, and I will be honored to lead the way myself. But at one point there is a height that must be taken if a successful passage

is to be made. I will conduct you there. Gladly."

The Greeks moved out early the next morning, following the new route. Alec's first impression, when he saw the height, was of a macrocosmic potato some cloud-tall giant had dug halfway out of the earth and left to rot in the sun. It was afternoon by then, and the rain was still falling. When Xenophon called for volunteers, Alec was one of the first to step forward. As he did so, he thought he saw the Athenian frown. Then, glancing down the long line of volunteers, he frowned himself, and wished he hadn't been quite so eager to pasttape the forthcoming assault. For "Duris the Boeotian" had also stepped forward.

A *taxis* consisting of five *lochoi*, or companies, was formed. Timasion of Troy commanded the *taxis*, and the five *lochoi* were commanded respectively by Aristonymus of Methydrium, Agasias of Stymphalus, Callimachus of Parrhasia, Aristeas of Chios and "Alexander of Lacedaemon".

Numbered among Aristeas's peltasts was "Duris the Boeotian".

WHEN THE CARDUCHI perceived the Greeks intent, they began rolling boulders down the side of the mountain. The assault force, however, had been divided into two teams, and by this time the foremost team, which consisted of the *lochoi* of Aristeas, Callimachus and Alec, were halfway to the summit, having followed a more direct and less conspicuous route.

The "potato" had resolved into slopes made muddy by the rain, which still continued to fall, and, higher up, gaunt precipices scarred by treacherous trails. Aristeas commanded the advance company and

Alec the rear. Toward dusk, the former breasted an eminence and surprised a body of Carduchi who, believing themselves safe, had sat down to warm themselves around a communal bonfire. They fought with commendable ferocity till they saw they were outnumbered; then they fled down the mountainside like frightened goats.

Aristeas and Callimachus thought that the eminence was the summit, but they soon perceived that there was another eminence above it. However, darkness had descended, so the final assault had to be put off till morning. A message was sent to Timasion of Troy updating him on their position and suggesting that Aristonymus and Agasias storm the summit from the other side of the mountain.

At dawn the advance was resumed. The rain had ceased during the night and had been supplanted by a gray mist. The trail was so badly eroded that in some places it was necessary to proceed single file. The mist didn't help matters either, although from Alec's point of view it was an asset rather than a liability. It gave the height a Gothic air and added a mysterious quality to the deep ravines and serpentine windings far below. In a word, it provided atmosphere.

Absorbed in pasttaping the background, Alec forgot about the action, and in the process committed an unforgivable sin: he fell behind his own troops. He did not even notice when an abrupt turning of the narrow trail hid the rearmost of them from view. Enthusiastically he pasttaped a distant misted precipice, faced the steep slope of the height and pasttaped a gaunt growth of trees a dozen feet above the trail. A long-ago rivening of the rocks had produced a

narrow fissure opposite where he stood. As he pasttaped it, his eyes caught a sudden movement in the shadows, a dull gleam of bronze. His absorption in his art disintegrated abruptly and he leaped to one side just in time to avoid being impaled on a javelin.

Grimacing, a burly peltast with porcine eyes stepped out of the fissure, and vanished.

Jaited.

Alec jaited too. Rematerializing on the narrow trail 1.0625 seconds later, he dodged into the fissure.

In doing so, he staked his life on the assumption that "Duris the Boeotian" would not be there awaiting him. "Duris" wasn't.

The fissure extended into the cliff for about ten feet before the two walls came together. Alec positioned himself with his back against the juncture and, reasonably safe for the moment, tried to anticipate his opponent's next move.

To do so, he needed to know not only where the PastCo agent was, but when.

He got nowhere until, suddenly, he remembered the growth of trees he had pasttaped two days ago. The trees would provide an excellent position from which to cast a javelin, and provide protection as well. Moreover, they would give "Duris" an advantage analogous to that provided him by the Assyrian rooftop.

It was a good bet, then, that after jaiting the PastCo agent had climbed the slope and positioned himself behind the trees. His shorter-than-average jump-range would have permitted him to do this easily before Alec rematerialized, and he could hardly have failed to see Alec dodge into the fissure.

But if he was stationed behind the

trees waiting for Alec to come out, was he still in the future or had he jumped back to the present?

It was a critical question.

The answer, Alec was certain, lay in the tendency of most jait-jbit combatants to avoid the obvious. At this stage of the game, the parallel between the present contest and the previous one was almost exact. In the previous one, "Duris" had stationed himself in the future; thus, at first thought, for him to have done so in the present one would constitute the acme of obviousness.

But not on second thought. Granted, his stationing himself in the future would be an obvious stratagem. But wouldn't his doing just the opposite be an even more obvious stratagem?

Logic, then, favored his being in the future. But it didn't guarantee the fact. Alec shrugged. Life was chary when it came to handing out guarantees. Without further hesitation, he jbit.

He rematerialized in the fissure approximately three seconds after "Duris" had stepped out of it and jaited, and exactly 2.1250 seconds after he himself had jaited from the narrow trail. The only noticeable difference between the two points in time was the character of the morning mist. In the future, it was—would be—skimmed milk; in the present, it was pea soup. This much, at least, was in Alec's favor if he'd guessed wrong.

He moved to the mouth of the fissure and, raising his shield till he could just see over its bronze rim, began backing out onto the trail. Mist-shrouded, grotesque, the height took shape above him. The trees came gradually into view, gaunt, ghost-like, unreal. Something

gleamed among them, pierced the morning mist like lightning from the fingertips of Zeus. That which is obvious to one man is seldom obvious to another: the structure Alec had built faltered on its false foundation and came crashing down upon him, brick by logical brick.

His shield was as authentic as modern technology had been—would be—able to make it, but its authenticity was its Achilles' heel; a bronze rim, four layers of imitation bull's hide and a bronze boss fall abysmally short of impenetrableness. The layers of ersatz hide slowed the javelin's momentum, but enough remained to allow the point to imbed itself deeply in his left shoulder. The double impact knocked him flat on his back, and the third impact—that of his back against solid slate—tore the javelin from his shoulder and his shield from his left arm and sent both weapons hurtling into the depths below.

But he still had his own javelin and he still had full use of his right arm. A dream-like calm settled over him as he watched "Duris the Boeotian" descend the slope, cautiously at first and then with increasing confidence. Watched him advance along the narrow ledgelike trail. Watched with half-closed eyes, watched without moving a muscle. He waited—waited till he could see the globules of sweat upon the PastCo agent's upper lip; till the man's soaring confidence reduced to near zero his reactive ability to jait. And then, with a single flowing movement that consumed the last morsel of his strength, he sat up, drew back his right arm and cast his javelin straight toward "Duris's" chest.

"Duris's" right foot was mere inches from the edge of the trail and he had lifted the rock over his head pre-

paratory to bashing out Alec's brains. However, he managed to elude the javelin by twisting his upper body to the left. Unfortunately for him, the maneuver threw him off balance, and when he got rid of the rock in the only way he could without dropping it on his head—i.e., by casting it forward—he lost the last of his equilibrium. Perhaps he could have jaited, but he didn't—probably because he realized Thanatos would jait too. Presently he began to scream as, arms flailing, he topped backward into nothingness. It was a long scream, the longest Alec had ever heard. It cut off abruptly, like a broken sound track.

IT BEGAN TO RAIN AGAIN. Alec lay upon his back, and the falling rain was cold upon his face. It came down steadily. It formed Lilliputian lakes on the rocky trail, and the lakes overflowed their banks and created Lilliputian rivers, and the rivers flowed all around him. From far above came the sound of a trumpet. It was followed by the fierce battle cry of the Greeks—"Eleleu! Eleleu!"—as they stormed the summit.

His left shoulder had gone numb a moment after "Duris's" javelin had pierced it. Now, feeling began to come back. As yet, there was no pain—only a remote throbbing that seemed less a part of him than the ground on which he lay, than the falling rain. Suddenly, and for no apparent reason, he jbited mentally to the scene of his first jait-jbit encounter with "Duris", rematerializing in the Assyrian house where he had left Sarai. He saw again the room in which he had spent the night; saw "Duris" standing in the dawn-lit doorway. Once again, he jaited . . . saw the four pallets lying on the floor and the four sleeping forms

upon them. . .

"Sarai," he whispered into the falling rain. "Sarai."

No, she had not been there. And she should have been. The moment had been two days in the future—two days, almost, since he had farmed her out and gone his way with the Ten Thousand. There should have been five pallets, not four. *Five* sleeping forms. . .

What had they done to her, these people who had seemed so eager to take her in? What had *he* done to her in his haste to be rid of her? Had he killed her too—killed her in the same way he had killed his kid sister? By shirking the responsibility she entailed? He had known all along what kind of a crowd Marianne had been traveling with, and yet he had let her go on traveling with it because her absorption with her new friends had kept her out of his hair; had freed him from her. He was completely to blame for what had happened to her and he was completely to blame for whatever had happened to Sarai. Their blood was on his hands.

His hands were lying on his chest. Lifting his head, he looked at them. Yes, there was blood on them. The blood of Sarai and Marianne. He tried to wash the blood away by splashing them in the Lilliputian lakes and rivers, but it was no use and when he looked at them again there was more blood on them than before and his left shoulder was a deep dark well of pain. It was going to be a hard winter, this first one of the New World. He was glad that he would be able to spend it with the Pilgrims; glad that he would be able to suffer with them and go without. Spring would be late in coming, but it would come, and he would give thanks when the last snows melted and the first

birds sang. Thanks for the suffering that had been inflicted upon him, the suffering that would wash the blood from his hands, the blood of Sarai and Marianne.

WHEN XENOPHON, at the head of a detachment of Rhodesian slingers, found him, his mind cleared briefly and he said, "See to it, Xenophon, that Pasion wears my helmet instead of his own and order him to wear it at all times, except when he sleeps." Then the moment of clarity faded and he was back home in his study, waiting for Marianne to come in and tell him the Terrible Truth; and then, for some mysterious reason, the study dissolved and he was standing in a golden field, kissing a girl with night-black hair; and then the field dissolved too, and with it the girl Sarai, and log walls, their chinks filled with mud, rose round him, and it was night, and cold. Cold night, night cold, cold night.

VII

Reunion

THE NIGHT ENDURED for eight days. Toward dawn, Alec had a "dream". In it, Xenophon came into the tent where he was sleeping, and said, "Let us talk about your little sister, Alexander."

The tent was poorly lighted, and Alec had difficulty seeing the Athenian's face. "How did you know I have a little sister, Xenophon?"

"During your moments of fever you have spoken much, and it is wise that we discuss this matter now so that your recovery will not be further delayed. How many summers has your little sister seen?"

"Twenty-two."

"Then she is not really such a little

sister after all."

"No."

Xenophon leaned over the pallet where Alec lay. "But having married very young, she is unhappy—is that not so?"

"Yes, Xenophon. She is unhappy."

"How many children has she borne?"

"Three."

"And are all of them ugly and malformed?"

Indignant, Alec tried to sit up. He discovered that he couldn't. "No, Xenophon, they are *not* ugly and malformed. They are beautiful."

"But do you not find it strange that this unhappy sister of yours who was married so young to a man she was not suited for and who was not suited for her should have borne three beautiful children?"

"It—it is strange in a way, I suppose."

"Your sister cries frequently, does she not? And wishes she were dead?"

Again Alec tried to sit up. This time, he almost succeeded. "She never cries!" he said. "And far from wishing she were dead, she loves life more than anyone I've ever known!"

"But do you not find this strange also? That a woman who is unhappily married to a man she does not love and who does not love her should never cry and should have an overwhelming desire to live?"

Alec did not answer.

"Do you think it is possible that your sister may be happy?" Xenophon asked. "That through sheer good fortune she may have married someone for whom she was ideally suited and who was ideally suited for her?"

"But she *had* to marry him, don't you see? And it was my fault! Our parents were killed in an accident when she was fifteen. That made me auto-

matically responsible for her. And I failed to live up to that responsibility. I failed *her*! Every time I look at another girl I see her face! Every time I—"

Xenophon raised his hand. "I have seen you torture yourself long enough, Alexander. Ever since we found you on the mountainside you have been crying out over and over not about the crime which 'Duris the Boeotian' clearly committed against you, but about imaginary crimes you yourself committed against your sister and against a slave girl named Sarai. Do you not understand that if the presence of tears denotes unhappiness, their absence can very well denote the exact opposite? Do you not understand that if a desire to die denotes despair, a desire to live must almost of necessity denote a *lack* of despair? And do you not know that a husband and wife who are deeply in love are more apt to have beautiful children than a husband and wife who are not? Your crimes are made of mists, Alexander—the one against your 'little' sister, and by extention, the one against the slave girl Sarai. So sleep, and cry out no more."

WHEN ALEC NEXT AWOKE, it was dawn, and Pasion was standing beside his pallet. Through the goatskin walls of the tent came the multifarious sounds an army makes when it is getting ready to move. There were shouts, curses, the whinnying of horses and the rattling of weaponry. In the background there was another sound—a roaring rushing sound, as of great quantities of water flowing.

He must have frowned, for Pasion knelt beside him and said, "It is the river Centrites that you hear, Alexander. Eight days have passed since you were wounded, and the army has

crossed the Carduchian Mountains."

Alec's first thought was for his helmet. At first glance, there was nothing to distinguish the one upon his friend's head from a thousand others of similar design, but a second glance revealed the technological nuances that marked it unmistakably as a product of YoreCo's Special Equipment Shop.

His next thought was for his micro-tape cartridge case. Panic touched him when he realized that his leathern vest had been removed, then receded when he saw the vest lying beside the pallet. A quick palpation of the inside pocket assured him that the case was still there, and simple logic assured him that the tapes were too.

He fought to keep his relief from showing on his face. "Whose tent is this, Pasion?" he asked.

"Xenophon's. You would appear to be his favorite captain, Alexander, since it is the only tent the army has, and seems to have been obtained for your benefit alone, as Xenophon seldom sleeps in it himself. Yes, I would say definitely that you are his favorite captain. Else why did he delegate me, the same day you were wounded, to oversee your recovery, and relieve me of all other duties?"

A deep lethargy dulled Alec's curiosity, and he said only, "Have we crossed the Centrites?"

"No. We are still on the Carduchian side. The Carduchi still threaten our rear, and on the heights across the river there is an army of Armenians, Mardians and Chaldeans waiting for us to attempt a crossing. Downstream there is a place where we can more easily ford the stream: that is why we are moving out."

A Cilician slave entered the tent, bearing a steaming bowl of noisome gruel. He knelt down opposite Pa-

sion and began spoon-feeding the patient. The gruel had a familiar taste that resurrected in Alec's mind memories of having been similarly fed during his eight-day bout with the infection engendered by "Duris's" dirty javelin point. As soon as the Cilician slave departed, two Syrian slaves came in carrying a crude litter made of saplings and sheepskins. Under Pasion's directions, they lifted the patient upon it and bore him outside.

The slanting sunlight blasted Alec's retinas and for a while he could not see much of anything. Then, gradually, he made out the ranks of Greek soldiers that were being formed, and presently, beyond them, he saw the gleaming ribbon of the Centrites, and the sheer cliffs that comprised the opposite bank. Upon the clifftops he distinguished the tiny figures of horses and horsemen.

The litter swayed soporifically as the bearers bore it along the river bank in the army's wake. The river widened, grew shallower. The wily Xenophon had divided the army into two main groups—*supertaxeis*, as it were—one under his command, the other under Cheirisophus's. Cheirisophus's half entered the stream first, and Xenophon's half remained behind with the camp-followers and the baggage-cattle. The Carduchi, high in the hills behind, unleashed successive volleys of arrows, all of which fell short. The Greeks crossing the river began shouting "A! la! la! la!", the peltasts and hoplites banging their lances against their shields. But the Armenian, Mardian and Chaldean troops, who had abandoned the heights and formed their line directly opposite their advancing foe, did not budge.

Then the wily Xenophon led a large body of cavalry upstream and made as

if to cross at the site of the recently struck camp. Immediately the forces facing Cheirisophus, fearing they might be outflanked, retreated. Instead of pursuing them, Cheirisophus, when he gained the Armenian side of the river, charged the heights, where only a token force remained, and took them with ease.

Meanwhile, Xenophon came back downstream and drove off the Carduchian bowmen, who had ventured partway down the hillsides. Afterward, the camp-followers and the baggage-cattle began crossing the river. Alec's bearers set their burden down on the lip of the gently sloping bank and awaited their turn. The camp-followers were a colorful lot. Somehow they had managed to hang onto one of their wagons and had accomplished the herculean task of getting it across the mountains. Drawn by a team of oxen, it lurched alarmingly as it entered the river, regained its equilibrium as the water rose past the hubs of its flimsy wheels. Alec recognized it as old Anytus's.

Presently he saw old Anytus himself. The weapons-repairman was wading behind the wagon, thigh-deep in water. Wading beside him, hip-deep, was a girl. A slender girl with a perilike face and long black hair. A girl wearing a red blouse and a blue skirt, frayed and faded from innumerable washings. A girl with a red-and-blue shawl draped over her shoulders. Her name got as far as his lips, but for the life of him he couldn't utter it, and then, intuitively, she turned and looked straight at where he lay, propped painfully on one elbow, and when she recognized him she gave a little cry and began floundering through the water, falling once and vanishing from view, and finally running up the bank and kneeling beside

him, crying, "Alexander, Alexander, I did not know you were ill!"

Still he could not utter her name, but there was a good reason now, a sound reason, for his lips were covered with hers. The river water that drenched her hair ran down upon his face and neck. It was only when she raised her head to catch her breath, when, defying the law of gravity and his own weakness, he put his arms around her waist, that the name at last found freedom. "Sarai."

Tears began intermingling with the river water that fell like rain upon his face. "I would have stayed in the village, O Alexander, but I could not bear to be so far apart from you. I ran away as soon as you left and came back to the camp of the camp-followers. I promised Anytus that I would cook and wash for him if he would take me along, and he agreed. Dear Alexander, I hope you are not angry with me."

He looked up into her large brown eyes, realized for the first time how deep they were. Saw for the first time the promises they held. "I'm glad you ran away."

She fell to kissing him again, then abruptly drew back. He saw her blush; then he, too, became aware that they had an audience. It was quite a large one, consisting, in addition to the two bearers, of several hundred grinning peltasts and several hundred grinning hoplites. Sitting on his horse a short distance away, regarding the reunion with luminous dark eyes, was Xenophon himself.

Alec found himself not only equal to the occasion but capable of taking advantage of it. "I request, Xenophon," he said, "that in addition to the favors you have already accorded me you accord me one more. I would like to have this slave girl at

my side for the remainder of the march in order that I may look after her."

Zenophon smiled. "It would seem, Alexander, that you need more looking after than she, but how better could such a purpose be served? Request granted."

VIII Snow

TWO DAYS AFTER entering Armenia, the Ten Thousand passed around the source of the Tigris. At this point, Tiribazus, the deputy-governor, put in his appearance. The Greek generals met with him and agreed, in exchange for his promise not to interfere with the march, to refrain from vandalizing any of the villages in their path. Three days later, with Tiribazus following at a discreet distance with a large body of cavalry, the Greek army arrived at the palace of Sequanor and quartered in the villages encompassing it.

That night, it snowed heavily, and in the morning none of the men wanted to get up. To shame them into doing so, Xenophon began cutting wood. Pasion was the first to follow his example, and soon he and Sarai had a roaring fire going in front of Alec's/Xenophon's tent. Meanwhile, Alec, who had recuperated sufficiently to do for himself, discovered that some time during the night his micro-tape cartridge case had been stolen.

He knew it had been in the pocket of his leathern vest last night because he had replaced it there after inserting the fifth and final cartridge in "Pasion's" helmet while the Arcadian was out foraging and while Xenophon, during one of his rare visits to the tent, was napping on the pallet he

had procured for Sarai. Sarai had remarked on what a strange little box it was and had asked what it was for, and Alec had answered, "To keep strange little things in."

Clearly, "Duris the Boeotian" had been wrong in assuming AgoCo didn't have an agent-assassin on the March. Just as clearly, that agent was either Sarai or Pasion.

Sarai could safely be ruled out. AgoCo would hardly have sent a nineteen- or even a twenty-one year old girl on a mission that involved a 3,000 mile hike. It was true that she hadn't shown up till half of it was over, but the second half was by far the more arduous, and it was unlikely that a twenty-first century American girl would be able to survive it. The fact that Sarai had managed to survive it thus far merely served to argue that she was what she both seemed and claimed to be—a Babylonian peasant girl.

That left Pasion. Pasion slept just within the doorway of the tent and had strict orders to rouse Xenophon and/or Alec should anyone try to enter. Since Alec removed his vest each night before going to bed and used it to augment his rather thin blanket, the Arcadian could easily have lifted the cartridge case after Alec and Sarai had fallen asleep. Xenophon had left early in the evening, so there would have been no witnesses.

Before passing judgment on his friend, however, Alec inspected the tent's goatskin walls. None of them had been cut. Next, he went outside and checked the tent stakes. All were securely in place, nor were there any footprints in the snow.

It *had* to be Pasion. Not only was he the logical candidate, he was the *only* candidate.

It was he who had made friends

with Alec, not the other way around as it had at first seemed. Probably he hadn't intended to steal the cartridge case till the Ten Thousand reached Trebisond, but when Alec's helmet had been handed to him outright he had changed his mind and decided to pasttape the rest of the pastacular himself. To do so, he had needed the fifth and final micro-tape cartridge, and not knowing Alec had secretly inserted it, he had stolen the case.

Alec still might have had doubts concerning his friend's guilt had there not been still another factor. In accepting Alec's helmet, Pasion had turned over his own for Alec to wear. Now that Alec was up and about, Pasion should have asked for his own back. He hadn't.

Alec sighed. He supposed he could expect to be assassinated any minute of the day or night now. But he rather expected Pasion would hold off till they got to Trebisond. He was, after all, responsible for Alec's well-being, and would be the first to hear about it if something untoward happened to his charge.

For the time being, Alec decided to wait and watch.

THE FOLLOWING MORNING, after again quartering in the villages, the Ten Thousand reformed their ranks and resumed the march. Tiribazus proved no more trustworthy than had Tissaphernes—an eventuality that surprised no one—and set up an ambush in a range of rolling hills; but Xenophon, anticipating such a move, went on ahead with a *taxis* of peltasts and a detachment of cavalry, attacked the deputy-governor's forces from the rear and put them to rout. Three days later, the Greek army crossed the Euphrates near its source.

Now, a fierce north wind began to

blow. More snow fell, and the wind piled it into knee-deep drifts. Many of the baggage-cattle began dropping from exhaustion. On the fourth day after the crossing, some of the men began collapsing from malnutrition and fatigue. The rest staggered on on frostbitten feet, blinded by the whiteness of the snow.

On the evening of the fifth day, Cheirisophus, in the lead, look over a group of Armenian villages. Several were set aside for Xenophon's rear *taxeis*, which were being harassed by the remnants of Tiribazus's cavalry. When the inhabitants of one of them turned out to be inhospitable, Polycrates, one of Xenophon's captains, asked permission to move in on it with a company of peltasts. Xenophon gave his okay, but suggested that Polycrates wait till morning. Despite the rigors of the march, Alec had fully recuperated, and, sick of waiting for Pasion to make some untoward move, decided to provide the Arcadian with an ideal opportunity. So he asked Xenophon if he could accompany Polycrates. When Xenophon said he could, Pasion, as Alec had anticipated, promptly insisted that he be allowed to go along. After a moment's hesitation, Xenophon gave his approval.

The company set forth in a gray morning murk. Predictably, Pasion wasted no time in gaining Alec's side. "Have you ever visited Arcadia, Alexander?" he asked.

"No."

"I hope someday you will. It is lovely there. The greenness of the fields is surpassed in beauty only by the greenness of the olive groves, the blueness of the sea only by the blueness of the sky."

The nostalgia sounded genuine, but Alec didn't buy it. The company, by

this time, had reached the perimeter of the village. The houses were underground, but the warmth rising from them had melted the snow, betraying their location. As the peltasts moved in, scores of Armenian peasants armed with clubs and spears boiled out of a dozen well-like doorways.

The peltasts met them head-on, and hand-to-hand combats became the order of the day. Alec, keeping a wary eye on Pasion, engaged an ape-like Armenian wielding a heavy cudgel. He was about to jait-jbit and overcome the man from behind when Pasion leaped between them and caught the Armenian's descending cudgel on his shield. The force of the blow knocked the Arcadian to his knees and broke the straps that held the shield on his left arm. The Armenian raised the cudgel for a second blow. Alec jaited, got behind the Armenian, jbited and grabbed the cudgel. Twisting it free from the man's grasp, he hit him over the head with it. The Armenian collapsed. A few moments later, hostilities came to an end as those of the villagers who were still on their feet took to their heels and disappeared into the gray murk.

The Armenian's cudgel, if it had connected with "Pasion's" helmet, would have demolished the tape recorder hidden in its ridge. It had been a close call, both for Pasion and the pastacur.

Alec helped the Arcadian to his feet. It was the latter who spoke first. "You move with the swiftness of Zeus' lightning, Alexander. I owe you my life."

Alec sighed. "No more than I owe you mine."

And it was so. Further proof of Pasion's innocence was unnecessary.

Nevertheless, Alec exacted it. "I would like my helmet back," he said.

"And I, mine. Yours hums sometimes and makes my head ache." The exchange was made. "Your thoughts seem far away, Alexander."

Alec's thoughts were. They had flown all the way back to Adanti, to a moment he had half forgot. Again he left the camp of the camp-followers carrying a dark-haired girl across his shoulder. Again she appeared abruptly on the ground before him. No, not abruptly. The time-lapse could be stated more specifically than that. *Exactly 2.1250 seconds after she vanished from his shoulder.*

Jait-jbit, jbit-jait, the name of the game was "Dissimulate".

IX

Aphrodite Pandemos

THE CHASTE SLOPES of Olympus had become an anathema to her azure eyes. The marmoreal palace of Zeus a fulsome rookery.

"Was it for this I rose from the sea?" she asked the other gods and goddesses one day. "To languish here and supervise sex from on high?"

"Look below and to the east. Do you see that execrable mortal standing there? Ever since the Battle of Cunaxa he's had at his very fingertips the most luscious piece of ass you ever saw, and not once has he fucked her—not once! It's enough to bring a love goddess to tears. Not long ago, he even tried to get rid of her, and now, just as he was starting to get turned on, a complication has arisen and turned him back off.

"Well, I'm not going to let it happen that way! This time, I'm going to do my supervising on the scene. Farewell Zeus, Hera, Hephaestus, Apollo, Athena, Ares, Artemis,

Hermes, Hestia, Helios, Selene, Iris, Hebe, Ganymede, Poseidon and Amphitrite. I go to joining the Ten Thousand on their march to the Euxine Sea!"

HALF-STARVED, half-frozen, half-dead, the Ten Thousand took up *pro tempore* residence in the underground Armenian villages. They were forced to share their quarters with the villagers' livestock as well as with the villagers, but there was an abundance of food and warmth and wine.

As Xenophon's aide, Alec had been assigned a room of his own. Sarai had already moved into it, but he put off doing so till evening, phrasing and rephrasing in his mind the bitter accusation he intended to hurl at her the minute he stepped in the door.

The room was at the end of a long tunnel-like corridor. The door consisted of a heavy curtain of sewn-together goatskins. He paused outside it, breathing a little hard. Then, impulsively, he drew it aside and stepped into the room.

He paused.

The room was about eight feet long by six feet wide, and the pallet on which Sarai was lying took up most of the floorspace. As a matter of fact, in stepping into the room he had almost stepped on her.

A primitive oil lamp hanging from a rafter cast unreliable light from wall to wall. When his eyes grew accustomed to it, he saw one of Sarai's sandals lying in one corner of the room and the other in the opposite corner. It was as though she had kicked them off.

Just to the right of the doorway lay a tangle of garments comprising a red blouse, a blue skirt and what looked like a pair of cotton drawers. It was at this point that he confronted the fact

that the girl lying face down on the pallet didn't have a stitch on and that the part of her he'd almost stepped on was her bare behind.

He must have gasped for she turned over on her back and looked up at him.

"Sarai, what in the world."

"All—all of a sudden the room grew so warm that I could not stand my clothes on another moment. I just *had* to take them off. I—I know it is unseemly for you to find me like this, Alexander, but as long as you have. . . ." She smiled tentatively and raised her arms.

Around him bastions crumbled, ramparts fell. He realized suddenly that he was removing his vest. "It—it is kind of warm in here at that."

"Let me help you with your skirt."

"DOES IT HURT, Sarai?"

"It hurts wonderful."

"I wanted you before, I wanted you all along, but I—"

"I wanted you too."

"Not as much as I wanted you."

"More."

"Think of all the time we wasted."

"Are we going to make up for it, Alexander?"

"Every second of it."

"Ohhhh. Push harder, Alexander."

"I am pushing hard."

"Harder, harder, harder! Ohhhhh."

"Sarai, I think I'm—"

"Oh, Alexander. Ohhhhhhhhhhh!"

"Sarai!"

"ARE YOU READY again already, Alexander?"

"Yes. Let's try it from the side this time."

"All right."

"I LIKED IT that way, Alexander. Let's do it that way again."

"Come on."

"SARAI, I thought I heard someone laughing. Was it you?"

"No."

"That's funny. I could swear it came from someone right here in this room. From a woman."

"Alexander, it's getting hard again!"

"How should we do it this time?"

"The same way as before."

SOMETIME DURING the night, he awakened. The lamp had gone out hours ago, and he lay for a long time staring up into the darkness. Beside him, Sarai slept soundly. He reached over and rested his hand upon her belly. It was soft and warm and moist. Desire for her stirred in him again. How could he conceivably have thought that this sweet, passionate, warm, wanting, outrageously luscious creature was an agent-assassin? That she had stolen his cartridge case and planned to kill him? Surely he must have been out of his mind!

In the morning, he wasn't quite so sure. Had she really taken off all her clothes because the room was warm, he wondered, or had she done so to deflect his thoughts from the missing cartridge case? Perhaps he was the victim of a subterfuge designed to keep him so busy exploring the hills and dales of her body that he wouldn't have time to explore the windings and turnings of her mind.

Her clothes were still lying in a tangled heap by the door, and for a moment he was tempted to go through them on the chance that the case might be hidden in a secret pocket. But he couldn't quite bring himself to do so.

His doubts continued to build up throughout the day as he accompanied Xenophon on a tour of the vil-

lages and helped the Athenian obtain an accurate count of the wounded and the sick. By evening, the doubts had built up to such an extent that his head was beginning to ache; but the moment he returned to his underground room and saw Sarai lying on the pallet, they disappeared and did not reappear till morning.

Thus it was throughout the seven days the Ten Thousand quartered in the villages. Thus it was throughout the remainder of the march.

After leaving the villages, the Ten Thousand passed through the territories of the Phasiani, the Taochi and the Chalybes, climbed the slopes of Mount Theches and saw the distant sheen of the Euxine Sea. After fighting their way through the country of the Macrones, they arrived at last at Trebisond.

The Greeks proceeded to celebrate their arrival by holding a series of gymnastic games—a weird way, if you asked Alec, to commemorate the conclusion of a 3,000 mile hike. Meanwhile, credit was arranged for by Xenophon, and on the outskirts of the colony a second sea appeared—a sea of tents. Shortly, shopping excursions to Trebisond became a daily affair.

Alec had a week to wait before making rendezvous with the Transworld Timelines ship that “stopped” twice yearly in the hills southwest of the city. A week to find his missing cartridge case. A week to make up his mind whether Sarai was the AgoCo agent-assassin who had stolen it.

And she—if she *was* the AgoCo agent-assassin—had a week to complete her assignment.

In view of the fact that she was the only logical candidate, she *had* to be the agent-assassin. He was perfectly well aware of this—when he was away from her. But when they were alone

together in the new tent Xenophon had bought for them, he was aware only that he was in love with her; and instead of spending his time trying to figure out a way to trick her into betraying herself, he spent it trying to figure out a way to sneak her aboard the Transworld Timelines ship and take her back to the twenty-first century with him.

The days went by. The nights—

“SHALL WE do it from the side again, Alexander?”

“Do you want to?”

“Yes.”

“Slide your leg up a little higher.”

“Like this?”

“That’s it. There.”

“Oh.”

“Turn toward me a little more. There.”

“Ohhhhhh.”

“I’m going to roll you over now—all right?”

“Hurry, Alexander. Hurry.”

“There.”

“Oh, Alexander. Ohhhhhhhh!”

ON THE EVE of the seventh day when Alec suggested that they go for a walk, Sarai asked him to hand her the new tunic he’d bought for her in the colony several days ago and charged to Xenophon’s account. It was lying in the middle of the floor where she’d stepped out of it. When he picked it up, an object fell out of its inside pocket, which was odd, because when he’d bought it it hadn’t had an inside pocket, or an outside one, for that matter. The object was odd too—for 401 B.C. No, it wasn’t his missing cartridge case, it was a small vial. Of pills.

He picked it up.

There was no prescription label, but it wasn’t hard to figure out what the

pills were for.

Sarai snatched the vial out of his hand. Grabbed her tunic.

Without looking at her, he got into the tunic he had bought for himself when he bought hers. But he had to look at her eventually, and when he finally did he saw that she was looking at him. She was fully dressed, and the vial was safely out of sight. In the vacillating light coming from the oil lamp affixed to the center tent pole her peri-like face seemed to be falling apart.

"Oh Alexander, I'm so sorry!"

Alec shifted to Anglo-American.

"What's your real name?"

She shifted as easily as he had. "Sarah Smith."

He stepped closer to her and held out his hand. "If you'll give me the cartridge case, I'll leave, and try to forget any of this ever happened. Or maybe you haven't got it with you. Maybe you hid it in old Anytus's wagon."

She stared at him. "You mean that oblong little box I asked what was for? I haven't got it. I didn't even know it was a cartridge case!"

"Liar!"

She winced but she didn't drop her eyes. "Very well, I'm a liar. But I'm not lying now. I had to lie before or you wouldn't have taken me on the March, and even as it was, you almost didn't. And after that, I had to keep on lying. I knew you were with the Ten Thousand—I obtained a copy of your dossier from YoreCo before I left the present. My parents are rich, and rich girls can usually get just about anything they want, except, of course, the things they really want. From your dossier I learned all about you, and decided you were just the sort of person I needed to see me safely through the Down March. I pin-

pointed the time almost to the hour when the Greek army was in the vicinity of the village Artaxerxes's forces had fled through, and I hired a 'timer' to bring me back. I knew your face by heart from the photo contained in your dossier, and I was going to follow the Greek army when it returned to camp, and somehow seek you out. I knew that if I put on a good enough act you'd buy it, and that you wouldn't dream of leaving me defenseless among ten thousand men. But I didn't have to find you: instead, you found me, entirely by accident of course. All I had to do from that point on was lie, lie, lie, and so I lied, lied, lied in that silly language I'd hypnotized myself along with half a dozen others. And you believed me. So utterly that even when I jait-jbited while you were carrying me to that wretched Assyrian village you still didn't catch on. Look at me! Look at this monstrous prevaricator! This deceiver, this dissimulator. Look at her and try to believe that she'd go to such preposterous lengths for the sake of a histori-thesis!"

"A histori-thesis?"

"Yes. On Books Two, Three and Four of the *Anabasis*. The *Katabasis*. I'm majoring in Greek history and happen to have total recall, and I guess I've always liked doing things nobody else would dream of doing. Anyway, I decided that for my histori-thesis I'd do an eye-witness account of the Retreat of the Ten Thousand. So I booked return-passage on the Transworld Timelines ship that's due here tomorrow morning and hired a 'timer'. Then—"

"Then you went to the corner pharmacy and refilled your instant birth-control pill prescription—right?"

"That's a dirty implication to make, Mr. Alexander Vincent Henry! It just

so happens that *enlightened* twenty-first century girls carry instant BeeSees with them at *all* times, but coming from an old-fashioned neo-Victorian family, you wouldn't know that. And coming from an old-fashioned neo-Victorian family, you wouldn't know either that when a girl falls in love with someone and experiences an overwhelming desire for him, she has as much right to make advances as he has, especially when he doesn't know enough to. It's bad enough that you should think I'm a common thief without thinking I'm a common tart too!"

"I don't think you're a common thief," Alec said. "I think you're an uncommon one. And I also think that before this night is out you're probably going to try to kill me, or hire someone to do the job for you, so that you can take possession of the final micro-tape cartridge and so AgoCo can acquire the franchise for the past-acular by reason of YoreCo's subsequent default."

She had taken a backward step and her face, so ruddy a moment ago from the sun and the wind, was now white. "You think I'm one of those horrible agent-assassins? Alec, you *can't* believe such a thing!"

"Oh yes I can." Alec held out his hand again. "Give me the case. I know you have it hidden somewhere. If it's in old Anytus's wagon, we'll go to the camp of the campfollowers and you can hand it over to me there."

For want of a better weapon she tore off one of her sandals and, before he caught on to her intention, brought it down with all her might upon his palm. "There's your case, Mr. Alexander Vincent Henry! The only case you're ever going to get from me!" She turned her back on him. "Go away! You neo-Victorian

hypocrite! You seducer. You—you sex fiend!"

Alec blinked. Then someone coughed just outside the tent flap. A discreet moment later Pasion stepped into the tent. "Xenophon requests your presence, Alexander."

Shaking his right hand to quell the tingling of the palm, Alec pointed to Sarai with his left. He shifted from Anglo-American to Doric. "Keep her here till I get back, Pasion," he said unthinkingly. Then he strode out into the night, the richer—or the poorer—for having lost one Babylonian slave girl.

X

Apologia

XENOPHON'S TENT was considerably larger than any of the others and was pitched on slightly higher ground. Alec found the Athenian sitting at a portable wooden table, a roll of papyrus before him, a reed pen and a small cruse of ink adjacent to his right hand. He had purchased a new military outfit in Trebisonde that was even more resplendent than the one he'd packed from Athens, and he fairly shone in the combined radiance of a pair of klieg-like oil lamps.

After the two men exchanged greetings, Alec sat down on a bench opposite the Athenian. Casually Xenophon reached beneath the folds of his golden mantle, withdrew the missing cartridge case and laid it on the table. Alec gasped.

Sure, Pasion would have roused him if an *outsider* had entered the tent. But not if Xenophon had entered it. And if Xenophon, after removing the case from Alec's vest, had sworn the Arcadian to secrecy, Pasion naturally would have told no one.

"Why, Xenophon?"

"You are an intelligent man, Alex-

ander, and so, indubitably, are your masters. Yet you failed to anticipate that someday one of your enemies would, by making greater use of the simultaneity of time, gain an insuperable advantage in the profit war you are waging.

"Let me elaborate. You, for the sake of simplicity, shall be this enemy. Very well. You find among your slaves a husband and wife who have known semi-poverty all their lives. The woman is with child, and the advanced science of your era enables you to determine that the child will be a male. You then hold the prospect of riches before the man's and the woman's eyes—not great riches, but modest ones, for to someone who has never owned a half-daric, a full daric represents a fortune. You then present your proposal, and they accept it. Then, after teaching them all they will need to know, you send them back to a point in the past that precedes the Expedition of Cyrus by some thirty years. The child is born, and the parents rear him in accordance with their instructions, preparing him throughout his youth for a mission whose full meaning is beyond his comprehension because he belongs to a different thought-world than they, but a mission which he should nevertheless be able to complete. The parents name this child—perhaps by accident, perhaps by design—'Xenophon', and they explain to him exactly what he must do when the time comes and assure him that after he has done it he can, if he wishes, remain in the age to which the mission ultimately will lead him and in which he rightfully belongs. Are you beginning to understand, Alexander?"

Dazed, Alec said, "I think so . . . I think your parents' so-called masters

probably gambled on your turning out to be the real Xenophon. But why are you telling me all this when the main purpose of your mission is to murder me?"

"That is no longer so, Alexander. It is no longer so because of three reasons, none of which my parents' masters took into consideration. In my youth, I was walking down a narrow thoroughfare one day when a barefoot old man with crooked legs and a misshapen face barred my path and asked me where men were made honorable and good. When I could not answer, he said, 'Follow me, and find out'. I followed him and became his pupil. The pupils of Socrates, Alexander, do not commit murder.

"The second reason is that the society of which I am a part is a vastly different one from the one that molded my parents. I do not say it is a better society: I say only that, being a product of it, I cannot act in quite the same way that I could were I a product of yours. Nor am I any longer compelled to. Freedom from poverty has had an ennobling effect upon my parents—my father, in fact, has attained the status of knight. Although they instructed me in accordance with the wishes of their masters, they told me that when the time came to complete my mission, the manner of its completion, or whether I completed it or not, would be entirely up to me."

"And the third reason?"

Xenophon ran his fingers over the chrome-plated surface of the cartridge case. "What would I do in an age capable of workmanship such as this, Alexander? In an age capable of recording reality on tiny spools no larger than a pebble? I would be fit only to sweep floors or to carry out refuse. Both you and my parents are honor-bound not to reveal my future

to me, so I do not know whether even in my own age I shall amount to more than I already have. But I do know this: in your age, I would amount to nothing, and even though I am a quiet man, given mainly to hunting and fishing and to philosophical thought, to amount to nothing would be more than I could endure. Nor would I be able to endure the feeling of inferiority which would be bound to be my lot were I to pay even a brief visit to an age so vastly superior to my own. So you see, Alexander, even if I were capable of murdering you, there would be no point in my doing so."

"One thing still puzzles me," Alec said. "If it was your intention to return the cartridge case to me, why did you steal—why did you appropriate it in the first place?"

Xenophon smiled. "I thought that would be clear to you by now. I appropriated it in order to safeguard it. The play which its contents contain is even more important to me than to you. I am the protagonist, am I not?"

Alec sat there stunned. "I see now why you made me your aide," he said finally. And then, "When did you first find out I wasn't quite what I seemed to be?"

"At the arms pile near Sitace when you, a supposed Lacedaemonian, addressed me in Attic. I failed to detect 'Duris the Boeotian' in time, or I would have seen to it that he was expelled from the Greek army. The play became increasingly important to me. When you named Pasion to wear your helmet, I arranged for him to be near me; and after you recovered from your wound and fever, I made certain, by appropriating your cartridge case, that the major part of the march, at least, would live for posterity. Like all men who wish to rise

above mediocrity, I am vain. I *want* to be remembered and admired. I have kept notes since the beginning of the expedition, and probably someday I shall write an account of all the events that occurred and of my part in them; but what I write, no matter how excellent it may be, can never compare to the records contained in the cartridges in this case and in the cartridge in your helmet." He shoved the case across the table. "Take it, Alexander. Do not let it out of your sight. I hope you will forgive me for whatever distress my vanity may have caused you, and I hope you have not mistakenly accused someone else of an act that was entirely my own doing."

"Sarai!" Alec gasped. He stood up. "I must go, Xenophon. I have indeed accused someone else."

Xenophon sighed. "It is as I feared, then. I wish I could help you, but I cannot. I can only give you advice. When dealing with a woman, never be forthright or outspoken. Be devious."

"Thanks," Alec said. "I'll try to remember."

XI

Alexander the Greatest

IN HIS and Sarai's tent he found a bewildered Pasion but no Sarai. "One moment she was here, Alexander, the next, she was gone. I cannot understand how she could have disappeared right before my eyes."

"I can," Alec said. "And I think I know where she can be found."

He looked at his friend, remembering the hardships they had endured together, the adventures they had shared. "Good-by, Pasion," he said.

"You would follow her then? And never return?"

"Never."

"Then it must be so. She will make a fine wife for you, this Babylonian slave girl—if you can convince her you are none of the things she said you were when I asked her what had gone wrong between you."

"I have a plan, Pasion."

"Farewell then, Alexander. I will sacrifice a goat and a sheep upon my return to Arcadia, that she may bear you many fine sons."

The time station lay four miles southwest of the city. Like all such stations, it consisted of a concealed locator-unit—buried, in this instance, in a grassy hillside—that beamed a signal over a radius of ten miles during the twenty-four hour period that preceded the timeship's arrival. The signal grew louder when you neared it, fainter when you moved away, but never did it become noticeable enough to be attributed by the uninitiated to anything more than a mild ringing of the ears.

When Alec reached the hillside, Sarai was already there. It was dawn, and in her chic Grecian tunic she looked like a modern office-girl waiting for an *electribus* to arrive and whisk her off to work.

He had one cigarette left. He lit it nervously, and went over and stood beside her. "Well anyway, Miss Smith," he said, "for once, I won't have to do any cutting."

Miss Smith did not even so much as turn her head.

"You see," he elaborated, "the person who does the pasttaping always

gets first crack at the cutting, just in case there happens to be something personal on the tapes that he wouldn't want the general public to see. But I don't think there's anything *that* personal on *these* tapes. Do you, Miss Smith?"

Did his eyes deceive him, or did she give a little start?

"Most of the really *personal* scenes," he went on, "are incomplete in any case, because sooner or later I'd remember to take off my helmet. Then, too, sometimes we'd remember to extinguish the lamp. Not always, but sometimes. Do you remember that time in our underground love-nest when you—"

"Alexander Henry, this is outright blackmail!"

He looked at her sideways. "Of course, if I had a good enough reason, I might consider eliminating them. But it would have to be a real good reason. Such as preserving them for exclusive inclusion in a certain His-Her micro-tape album that hasn't come into existence yet but which very well could if a certain party would consent for a certain other party to make an honest woman of her and to become her slave."

For a moment she stood there staring at him. Then, just as the timeship shimmered into view on the fifth-century B.C. hillside, she threw her arms around his neck and kissed him.

"Oh Alexander, you're the Greatest!" she said.

—ROBERT F. YOUNG

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MONTHLY AWARDS!

sometimes incoherent talk in which he praised an architectural monstrosity just down the street (an ugly red-brick building), repeated some of his 1961 speech (dealing with a fifties trip to Russia with his hard-liner right-wing wife—who has been credited by some for his increasingly rigid political stance), began several anecdotes which he then veered away from before reaching their punchlines, and concluded in a would-be rabblerous vein in which he repeated his assinine assertion (first made in *Starship Troopers*, c. 1959) that hard radiation was good for us (as a race, you understand) and that "You can have peace or you can have freedom, but you *can't have peace with freedom!*"

This last line produced a chorus of boos—the first time in my memory that a Worldcon Guest of Honor's speech has ever produced such a reaction. The boos did not apparently surprise Mr. Heinlein; he dogmatically asserted, "Those of you who booed—you'll find out I'm right!" And at that point he flourished his timer and left the stage.

It was a shocking event. It is always a shocking event when a man who had once earned our considerable respect shows himself no longer worthy of it. Yet it was hardly unpredictable. None of his political sentiments are new; most were first voiced by Mr. Heinlein in the middle-fifties, a time when he formed The Sons of Patrick Henry and took up a political stance slightly to the right of Joseph McCarthy. In the fifties and early sixties (as in 1961) Heinlein showed himself a witty and nimble proponent of his beliefs. They fueled his books, yet were presented with both conviction and a good deal of plausibility. The convic-

tion remains; the plausibility has long since withered.

What we were exposed to was an example of Mr. Heinlein's retreat from his once vigorous capabilities; one could call it senility, except that Robert A. Heinlein is a man in his sixties whose devotion to himself should have insured that senility would remain some many years in the future.

In the end I fault the Committee. They should have checked. They should have known better. That Robert A. Heinlein made a public fool of himself upon their stage is their responsibility.

THE REST OF THE CONVENTION also suffered from the Committee's relative inexperience with World SF Conventions (the Committee apparently entered stf fandom quite recently and had little experience even in attending other Worldcons). In chairman Ken Keller's introduction to the lavish Program Book (excellently produced by Tom Reamy, who has demonstrated his graphic abilities over a period of more than fifteen years now), Keller states "... science fiction has become much more than just the *literature* of ideas, it has become the *media* of ideas, and has achieved a status as a multi-dimensional artform." That sentence sums up a lot of what was wrong with the convention. From the grammatical error ('media' for 'medium') to the basically false assumption that stf has somehow transcended its basis as a literature (a subject worth an editorial in itself), Keller embodies the posturing of package over content which undid MidAmeriCon.

In terms of packaging it was an impressive convention. That is to say, the Progress Reports were well-

produced magazines (more of Tom Reamy's graphic prowess), the Program Book was a hardbound book of unexcelled appearance—and the actual programming of the convention was mediocre.

In one example, the Municipal Auditorium was booked (at convention expense) for the presentation of a play called "Sails of Moonlight, Eyes of Dusk," and actors were hired and paid union scale. This production involved considerable expense (paid for by the convention)—and was totally unworthy of either expense or effort. Ineptly scripted, acted more woodenly than most highschool dramatic-club plays, its presentation upon a theater stage only underscored its faults.

On another occasion five belly-dancers were presented as a program item. The first two had obvious ability and talent, but the third—the woman who had organized the event—was embarrassingly inept, her movements lacking all semblance of grace, and most of the audience left without ever finding out what the last two were like. Why a belly-dance exhibition at a World Science Fiction Convention? And, if one is to be held, why include someone totally incapable of executing a belly-dance? Another case of someone making a public fool of herself.

The backbone of any major sf convention is the speeches, panels, etc., by the authors in the field—those whom most readers wish to see and hear. This programming was sparse indeed in comparison with the more picturesque—but less relevant—events.

Although in the letters columns of the Progress Reports the Committee insisted that it had fresh ideas on the presentation of these talks and speeches, in fact not one of the many

useful suggestions offered were taken up and used. Although panels with six or eight people on them are unweildy, usually dominated by a vocal few, and rarely adequately prepared for by the participants—criticisms voiced in Progress Reports by both Jerry Pournelle and myself, among others—this type of panel dominated at MidAmeriCon. (The use of only two people, as either colleagues or combatants, in dialogues—a more useful programming device pioneered in 1967 in New York, and still far from used up—was ignored at MidAmeriCon.)

Although 1976 marked the 50th Anniversary of AMAZING and of science fiction, and the Committee had announced their intention of honoring this event, it was not done. I was asked, in late spring, to rewrite my editorial for the 50th Anniversary issue of this magazine for the Program Book, but with a deadline of only a week or two, to unspecified criteria, in order to make the piece more relevant—I'm largely quoting the request now—for the convention's better-informed membership. I did not. I regarded the request as a veiled insult. The editorial had been drawn from a speech I had given on three separate occasions to groups whose membership did not differ markedly in nature from that of the Worldcon; it struck me that what was wanted was a wholly new piece in which I did a conventional "history" of the magazine or the field—something they could live up with lots of pictures of old magazine covers. My attitude was that if they wished to use the editorial as it stood, fine. If not, too bad. They did not use it, nor did they ask me to be on any of the official program items, nor in fact did they *have* any program items

devoted to an observance of this 50th Anniversary, although James Gunn, whose *Alternate Worlds* I remarked upon here after its publication, was lauded ("his monumental sf history") in the Program Book and gave a speech (which I don't find listed in the program, now that I look for it) on the subject of sf's first fifty years.

Thus I attended the convention primarily as a fan, not as a professional. I was introduced at the Meet The Authors party by Bob Tucker (the party was cleverly scheduled for a swimming pool area of the main hotel after dark, when name-badges were impossible to read and faces hard to see), and appeared as a speaker at the Weird & Horror Genre Luncheon on Friday at the request of moderator Kirby McCauley. (I enjoyed that; it gave me a fresh group of topics and everybody at the speaker's table—a group which included C.L. Grant and Poul Anderson—was a pleasure to talk with.) For the rest of the time I joined my friends in partying, restaurant-hopping (I've had better steaks in Washington, D.C. than I did in Kansas City; a much-overrated town, all in all), and all the social aspects of a large sf convention which are fully independent of the official convention and unhampered by whatever mistakes the Committee may make.

The MidAmeriCon was not as large as forecast—some 2,600 attendees (less than the 2,900 in Toronto in 1973 or the 4,000 in Washington, D.C. in 1974)—but apparently a percentage of those attendees actually paid \$50.00 for an at-the-door mem-

bership; how large a percentage I don't know.

The MidAmeriCon set new records for ambitiousness and pretentiousness, however—largely in areas peripheral to the core of the actual convention: publications, dramatic presentations, etc. It is to be hoped that future Worldcons will profit by the lessons learned in Kansas City, and concentrate their efforts where they are actually needed. This year will be in Miami Beach; 1978 in Phoenix, Arizona. We shall see.

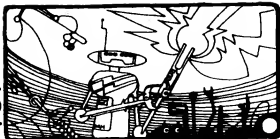
AN UNABASHED PLUG: Just out from T-K Graphics (one of the growing number of fan presses devoted to professional or semi-professional publishing): *SF Voices*, a collection of fourteen interviews conducted by Darrell Schweitzer.

Schweitzer will be recognized as the man who conducts *The Amazing Interview* for us, and indeed two of his interviews from this magazine (Silverberg, Bester) are included in *SF Voices*. Approximately the size and length of an issue of this magazine, the book is published in softcover at \$4.95 and offers interviews with: Alfred Bester, Robert Silverberg, Brian Aldiss, James Gunn, Gardner Dozois, Norman Spinrad, Gordon Dickson, Ben Bova, Ted White, Jack Williamson, L. Sprague deCamp, Frank Belknap Long, Gahan Wilson, and Jerry Pournelle. You can obtain a copy by writing directly to T-K Graphics, P.O. Box 1951, Baltimore, Md. 21203.

—TED WHITE

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...OR SO YOU SAY



Letters intended for publication should be typed, double-spaced, on one side of each sheet, and addressed to Or So You Say, Box 409, Falls Church, Va. 22046.

Dear Ted:

The only words which can describe my feelings about the September '76 issue are extreme disappointment. Of course Doug Beekman's cover was a fine imitation of Jeff Jones, and your editorial was extremely amusing, even though you painted yourself as a milquetoast. Honestly, Ted, you should have ripped open the pie-thrower's jugular with your teeth, and bashed nasty old Charles Platt with a ball-peen hammer. But no, you sat there and took it.

Aside from the features, however, each magazine relies basically on its story quality, and in this respect your September ish was woefully lacking. The first one I read was Charles V. DeVet's, "Salty For The Cat." Since you gave him a big build-up I thought this would be rather great, even though Rick Bryant's poor illustration rendered it suspect from the start. I've never read a science fiction love story that I liked. The first page and a half render this illo completely insane, and this pseudo-necrophiliac sexual sadomasochism turned me off from the start. Immediately the viewpoint switches from these weird aliens

to the priest who wants to martyr himself, which was an especially weak sequence. Then we switch viewpoints to Borash, who bored my ass off. More weak characterization, you'd think this guy spent his life in a glass tube. The writing and dialogue have all been poor up to this point, and things don't change. The whole weak framework of plot is only a border around DeVet's egotistical and pretentious delving into murk-magii life, which seems to be the only animal life on the planet. The ending was pointless and stupid. I remember receiving a rejection slip stating that I had sent you a plot synopsis, not a story. You were right, the thing was bad all around. But Charles DeVet published a plot synopsis, and not a story.

"Dream of Trumpeters," by Drusilla Newlon Campbell, was next on my list. This time there was a good illo, the only good Fabian wash illo you printed; the rest failed miserably. In this story I thought I was finally reading something good, a technique and style that made DeVet seem only the rankest of amateurs. This woman can write! Unfortunately her story was no story at all, but only the most obvious form of allegory. We know this story doesn't take place in the future, it's merely a dramatization of current events. The fact that two-armed bipeds are the only animal life

on the planet is too hare-brained an idea for it to be science fiction. Ms. Campbell's "real characters," are typical New Wave symbolologies who are deeply explored but remain incomplete nonetheless. One wishes that New Wave writers would go out and meet real people, so they could put them in their stories. The weakness of the male character is plausible, what isn't plausible is that he didn't kick himself in the ass all his life for allowing the neurotic fantasies of a childish and stupid woman to result in the genocide of an entire race. Certain parts of that story were so beautiful, it seems a crime to have it end up so badly, so typically dreary. The characters' lack of guilt is so ludicrous, it's not human at all, it's inhuman.

By the way, why was DeVet's story titled "Salty For The Cat"? There was no salt and there were no cats.

Next I read George R. R. Martin's "Nobody Leaves New Pittsburgh." This was probably the best short story in the issue. Martin at least seems to have known some real people, and for that reason his characters and dialog soar high above the other tripe which adorns this issue. He also knows how to write with grit and vigor, reminiscent of Keith Laumer but not as good. Unfortunately, aside from good characters and dialog, there wasn't much to recommend this tale storywise. I seem to remember a story with corpse labor having appeared in *Analog* some time ago, and Martin didn't elaborate much beyond his Deadman idea, except for the drama surrounding the Company town of New Pittsburgh. Unfortunately this made two Company stories for one issue, including Ms. Campbell's allegory. This was unpleasant, Ted, it seemed like you'd picked up a couple rejects from a Roger Elwood "theme

anthology." If Martin had lived up to the promise of his hard-headed character we'd have had a real story here, but he didn't. He, like most of the new writers, copped out with an ambiguous ending. Despite what literary critics might say, an ambiguous ending is not a good ending. Most stories don't deserve one, and the great literary figures were not as prone to ambiguity as the rather pretentious authors of AMAZING.

"Wilderness," by Fred Saberhagen, is another limp tale. The first story I read by this man was "Wings Out of Shadow," a Berserker story published when *Worlds of If* was the best sf mag. Now there was good space opera! He followed this with a bad Berserker short and an even worse novel called "Berserker Planet." It was one of those space operas with a true sclemiel as the main character, and a shipload of the "beautiful people". *Aaarrgh!* In this story he continues with low-quality work. First off, hippies are not really welcome. Hippies are out of style, Ted, the whole world is going straight and it's leaving science fiction writers struggling in its wake. The commune characters were dully worked out and rather unrealistic, mere cardboard representations for the writer to toy with. The revelation at the end and the astronaut's preaching were really in poor taste. Be more demanding in your selections, Ted.

"Mrs. T," by Lisa Tuttle, was another allegory, and another bad one. One might ask about this story, "Science Fiction?" Your blurb about changing sex roles rendered this story pretentious. Indeed, the story was just as pretentious as your blurb. After that wrasse [*sic*] remark about females changing into males, I dove into my library of research books and

couldn't find a thing to support this statement. I'm not surprised, it couldn't be true that a creature as complex as a fish would change sex. But it was a real winner when Mrs. T showed Leslie her shrinking boobs and her burgeoning boner. Stupid, Ted. Sick-en-ing.

All these stories suffered from similar faults. Bad characters, for one. "Salty For The Cat" seemed like an experimental *Analog* story, all science, no sense. Lack of storytelling skill was also very evident in these artsy-fartsy fantasies. Useless and pointless experimentation pervaded all. None of it was interesting. Probably the best experimentation went on in the '50's, things like Damon Knight's "Country of the Kind," or "The Handler," which succeeded in presenting facets of the human character. Two Company stories and two one-race stories in the same issue showed off a lack of originality. Sexual themes like "Mrs. T" and pornography like "Salty For the Cat" are neither interesting nor do they make for good stories. You say you like people you can care about in your stories. Can anyone honestly say that they cared about the turds in your September presentation?

What you need, Ted, and what we want, are stories we'd like to read, not Lisa Tuttle's warped idea of Great Art. Readers, Ted, remember us, we buy your mags, readers like stories such as Martin's "The Computer Cried Changel" You publish all too few of them, and you will continue to shrink your readership, not because of price hikes, but because of quality drops and narrowness of appeal. Stories in *FANTASTIC* have guts, humor, and originality. Stories in *AMAZING* are just blah.

[Why, then, does this magazine con-

sistently outsell FANTASTIC?—TW]

One last thing. This concerns John Shirley's letter. I've never read "Stone Circle," and I don't intend to. I am not one to decry a type of story I've never read, but I have read a number of stf stories about homosexuals. I've read Barry Malzberg's "Culture Lock," and I hated that. I read an adventure in *Vertex* called "Time Scoop," about soldiers from all times collected on a planet by an alien power to fight each other. Finally these men defeat their enemy and two of them stand on a mountaintop, gazing thoughtfully at the sea. One throws his arm over the other's shoulder and says, "This world is all ours, to do with what we will!" Well, we know what they are going to do. Recently you published another gay story by Grania Davis, which experience has taught me to avoid. And now a gay writer pens this letter praising trashy Tuttle. One other time in my memory Buzz Dixon wrote a letter calling Dr. Smith of "Lost In Space" a "mincing fairy." A vulgar and offensive gay had written a disgusting letter for that issue, and you demanded that Buzz apologize to him for the slur, as if it would materialize in the lettercol out of your force of will. Buzz never did apologize, it seems awful that a Vietnam Vet (his wife's name leads me to this conclusion) after all he went through should have to apologize to a hideous faggot.

Perhaps you've never come into actual contact with gays, Ted, perhaps you've never seen men in lipstick and make-up walking around on the streets. When you were a kid, perhaps none of your young friends was lured into a homosexual's apartment where he was then used against his will. Well I've come in contact with all this stuff. When I was very

young I lived on the North Side of Chicago, or Gaytown U.S.A. Some of my friends were raped by queens, and one of them took it to court. John Shirley and the rest of the fruits in Oakland and San Francisco may have decided to make themselves appear to be just wonderful, but they're still perverts. So I wish you'd get off this queer kick of yours, Ted, and start living in the real world. I'd hate for your magazines to become organs for the Gay community of sexual sado-masochists and chicken hawks. Open your eyes, go to a big city and see what the scene really is. You are insulated in Falls Church, but you're in trouble in Chicago, with its Twinkie Townhouses and Gay Lib Bars.

I've lived in the real world, Ted, I've seen a lot of bad things, both as a member of a street gang and in everyday adventures. This gives me the perspective to view the unreality of the stories in AMAZING. Were we only to hear the argument put forth by the gays, we'd believe they were the apples of the earth, but Ted, they're not. And if homosexuals must be given their voice, how about necrophiles, people who enjoy sex with corpses. How about people who enjoy sex with dogs and horses, people who enjoy mutilating each other for fulfillment. Open a whole [sic] in the dyke, I mean dike, and the whole flood of modern decadence must be allowed to flow in. This should be suppressed, not encouraged.

STEVEN L. DUFF
1505 N. Austin Blvd.
Chicago, Illinois 60651

Well, I bow to your superior wisdom, Steven. I lived for eleven years in the largest city in this country—New York—and not once was I molested by any men wearing lipstick and makeup

even though the city's hostility to private vehicles made a pedestrian of me much of the time. Then again, I lacked your cultural advantage—I was never a member of a street gang. I expect that's why it never occurred to me that all the characters presented in our September issue were "turds," nor the author of a letter in FANTASTIC several years ago "a vulgar and offensive gay" or "a hideous faggot." (I didn't consider his letter nearly as "disgusting." I might add, as I do yours.) Your characterisation of John Shirley and Lisa Tuttle—and, for that matter, the other authors in the September issue—seems to me fully as offensive in both word and tone as anything I've ever received from a reader of this magazine—the sort of thing which could give macho heterosexuals a bad name. Your final touch was to mail your letter with insufficient postage; I had to pay 11¢ postage-due for the pleasure of reading it.—TW

Dear Ted,

To make a long letter much shorter, I wanted to let you know that I've been reading AMAZING and FANTASTIC for the past eighteen years, stuck with both through all those other editors, ups and downs in story quality, financial and distribution hassles, the oftentimes quaint reprints, etc. My fondest memories of those other years center around the editorial guidance of Cele Goldsmith, later married as Cele Lalli. Meanwhile, here in the everlasting now, you've had the love for the field to publish stories of a new kind of fiction—a new kind of science fiction, at all events.

The two stories most blasted from the readers so far this year are the two I recall the fondest. I'm happy you published "Manikins" by John

Varley (in the January, 1976, issue)—Varley is a natural storyteller in a high style. There's no doubt in my mind that "Manikins" is one of his best. Lisa Tuttle's "Stone Circle" (March issue) was done in rare beauty. ("Mrs. T" in the September issue is my favorite in that issue.) Ms. Tuttle has a unique sense of wonder.

Missed *The Club House*. I'd like to see Susan devote a column to the semi-pro magazines.

Enjoyed the interview with Fritz Leiber, via Schweitzer, although it covered very little new ground.

And by all means, congratulations for helping AMAZING through your own years for us readers to enjoy.

BILLY WOLFENBARGER
Route 1, Box 203
Harrisburg, Oregon 97446

Although Susan Wood is no longer handling The Clubhouse, I'll pass on your request to Rich Brown.—TW

Dear Mr. White:

When I wrote my last letter to you, which was printed in the Sept. AMAZING, I was in a bad mood. And when I re-read it in your letter column, I regretted having sent it. However, what's done is done and I would like to make the following amendments:

1) First of all, I would like to set the record straight in that what I said was only my opinion. And then, it was my opinion of what should appear in a SF magazine. That is, when I called something trash (like *The Clubhouse*), I meant that I thought it was trash appearing in a SF magazine because it doesn't belong there. It might be great in a fanzine or something. So in that respect, I apologize to the appropriate people for that.

2) Next, what I was trying to tell you is what I thought should go into any SF magazine and that the rest

should be removed—perhaps to a fanzine or something. But again, that is my opinion and it obviously differs from yours. But then, identical opinions are seldom shared.

3) And lastly, my thoughts about fandom are my own, but it just seems to me that you are ripping-off the Silent Majority of SF readers who are not part of active fandom when you use space for the things I mentioned which could be used for more SF. That's all I'll say now.

Thank-you.

JON C. NELSON
2238 Beech
St. Paul, MN 55119

If there is any level on which a science fiction magazine can be considered superior to a book of collected stf stories, it is this: A magazine is an entity, a creature of personality and evolving existence. And a science fiction magazine distinguishes itself among other magazines by being devoted to stf; we don't simply publish stf, we also talk about it. In each of the non-fiction features of this magazine some element of stf is examined and discussed. In my editorial I deal with a wide-ranging variety of topics directly or indirectly linked to science fiction and the stories we publish here. In The Science in Science Fiction, Gregory Benford's occasional column, the scientific underpinnings of stories and stfs assumptions are dealt with. In the Amazing Interview major stf authors respond to direct questions about their work and their lives. In The Clubhouse the doings of those people who are active fans of stf, and the publications they put out, are discussed and reviewed. And here you, the reader, can have your own direct say, to either laud or criticise what we've published, to

carry on a conversation or pick a fight with me or with other readers. None of these features is intended for or designed for the in-group satisfactions of only a few: each is as accessible to our full readership as we can make it. If you regard yourself as a member of a "Silent Majority of sf readers who are not part of active fandom" I think you are treating yourself unfairly. "Active fandom" consists of people who enjoy science fiction and enjoy discussing it with others who reciprocate their feelings. There is no reason for you to consider yourself an outsider. "Active fandom" is a state of mind, not a club with dues and membership badges. I consider all the readers of this magazine to be part of one large community—those who love this unique kind of fiction enough to seek out a magazine devoted to it. You are obviously a member in good standing of this community; I think you owe it to yourself to read features like *The Clubhouse* each issue, simply to better acquaint yourself with the various aspects which make up your community. You might be glad you did.—TW

Dear Mr. White,

Although I've been reading sf for nearly twenty years, my reading has been more or less confined to what I've been able to find on library shelves, book club offerings, and paperback novels. Until recently, I really hadn't read the magazines at all; consequently, I have been all this time totally unaware of the phenomenon known as fandom. Despite the fact that nearly everyone I know reads some sf, we all mix our readings with liberal samplings of various other literary forms. Of course we discuss what we read but we tend to mix our material and discuss ideas rather than specific genres. We have just never

got onto the idea of fandom for any one literary discipline. The point is, now that I have become aware of fandom, I'd like to know more about it, not because I want to study it but because I would like to become actively involved with other sf aficionados. I'd like to know how I could obtain a list of available fanzines and if it is possible to obtain sample copies of same. I sincerely welcome responses to this letter.

ALLYN CADOGAN
RR1 Pioneer & Bagshaw
Parksville, B.C., Canada

I think The Clubhouse is exactly what you're looking for, but don't be surprised if the appearance of your letter here brings you a few sample offerings directly from hopeful fanzine editors. . . —TW

Dear Ted,

While I was reading and enjoying the September '76 issue, I noticed a very blatant mistake. In Greg Benford's column *The Science in Science Fiction*, Figure 1 is a curve relating Galactic Noise to wavelength in centimeters. The centimeter values are wrong by a factor of 1×10^3 . A frequency of 1 Megahertz (not Megacycles) has a wavelength of approximately 300 meters, or 30,000 centimeters.

Wavelength is a function of the speed of light, and is found by dividing the speed of light by the frequency of the signal. An approximate value is 300,000,000 meters per second.

I've been an Instructor for the Army Signal Corps in Radio Repair since November 1973, and we teach the students a converted and simple formula for finding wavelengths. It is 300 divided by the frequency in

Megahertz equals the wavelength in meters. This works out to what I previously stated; the wavelength of a signal having a frequency of 1 Megahertz is 300 meters.

This information is sent in an attitude of helpfulness. I enjoy all facets of both AMAZING and FANTASTIC and do not mind the \$1 price. In fact I would prefer to pay \$24 a year and get 2 mags a month.

Keep up the good work.

SP5 GREGORY S. HECK
A-1 Sch Bde Box 8045
Fort Gordon, Ga. 30905

Dear Sir:

Having just purchased the December 1976 issue, I find many things of interest. First of all, your editorial. After all, it's the first thing in from the table of contents.

I have always felt that Heinlein's best work was his juveniles. The one that hooked me on Heinlein (and SF) was *Space Cadet*. As for Franz Rotensteiner, don't worry about his opinions. Anybody who would pick Stanislaw Lem as the best SF writer in the world can't really know what he is talking about.

As for Joe Haldeman, you're right. As a 'reply' to *Starship Troopers*, *The Forever War* is better than it in every way. And, having not read *Mindbridge*, I can't say anything about writing or it being good or bad, but the publishers may expect it to be big. They bought a full page advertisement in *The New York Times Book Review*, at any rate.

Moving away from your editorial, I come to "Patrick Henry, Jupiter, and the Little Red Brick Spaceship." I like it, but which viewpoint was the main body of the story?

It seems to be two stories, the space race between Russia, the U. S.,

and Peter Van Dellinore; and Vito and Jan discovering the *Challenger*. Which was the real plot of the story?

Moving on to "Everything is Going to be All Right." I, once again, liked it. But this is Linda Issac's third story dealing with 'a house and the person who lives in it and the domestic applications of technology.' Of course, 'the person, the problem, and the outcome are not all the same,' but aren't there other situations you can get out of her?

The other stories and articles, I either liked for no reason at all, or disliked for no reason at all. Keep up the good work, and maybe AMAZING and FANTASTIC will be restored to a bi-monthly (or even monthly) schedule.

ROBERT NOWALL
6 Martin Road
Poughkeepsie, NY 12601

Dear Ted,

As a young British sf writer, I like to keep up with current developments in the genre on your side of the Atlantic by reading at least one American magazine per month. Alas, last time I visited London's best sf shop my regular rag (*F & SF*) was not in stock. I was just about to make a haughty and annoyed exit when my eyes fell upon the cover of 'AMAZING'.

"Wow!" I cried. "Not THE 'AMAZING'." (or words to that effect).

A handful of coins were excavated from my pocket and the magazine was mine.

I loved it. 'AMAZING', for all its age, shows great courage, freshness of approach and, above all, imagination (something that went down the can in other magazines years ago). Imagine my surprise and horror, therefore, when I reached the letter page and discovered that the magazine was

(cont. on page 132)

**SUSAN
WOOD**
**the
Clubhouse**



A WEALTH OF FABLE (two volumes), Joe D. Siclari, Fanhistorica Press, PO Box 1343, Radio City Station, New York, NY 10019; offset & mimeo; \$8.00 plus 75¢ postage & handling.

MAYA #11, Robert Jackson (U.S. Agent: Sam Long, PO Box 4946, Patrick AFB, FL 32925); irregular; offset; \$1 or 4/\$3.

STARLING #34, Hank & Lesleigh Lutrell, 525 W Main, Madison, WI. 53703; quarterly; mimeo; 50¢ or 5/\$2.

RUNE #48, David Emerson, 343 E 19th St., Apt 1B, Minneapolis, Mn. 55404; quarterly; mimeo; 50¢.

LOCUS #193, Charles N. & Dena Brown, 34 Ridgewood La., Oakland, Ca. 94611; 15 times a year; offset; 15/\$6.

SCIENCE FICTION REVIEW #18, Richard E. Geis, PO Box 11408, Portland, Or. 97211; quarterly; offset; \$1.25 or 8/\$7.

NICKELODEON #2, Tom Reamy & Ken Keller, 1131 White, Kansas City, Mo. 64126; irregular; offset, 4/\$7.

LUNA MONTHLY #63-65, Frank & Ann Dietz, 655 Orchard St, Oradell, NJ 07649; offset; 50¢ or 12/\$5.25 (checks/money orders payable to Franklin M. Dietz, Jr.).

A MATTER OF CRITERIA: At the

MidAmerican, the 34th World SF Convention held in Kansas City this past Labor Day weekend, two of my predecessors on this column—John Berry and Susan Wood—warned me good-humoredly that in taking on this chore I was letting myself in for receiving a lot of crudzines.

What's a "crudzine"? Pretty much what the name implies. Usually, a crudzine is a poorly reproduced fanzine the content of which does not live up to the quality of reproduction. Sometimes they are exquisitely reproduced—leaving only their content to draw the contempt of readers. Crudzines frequently contain amateur (in the worst sense of that word) sf fiction, "reviews" which tell you that a reviewer liked or disliked a given work without bothering to explain why, achromatic articles demonstrating neither point nor wit, and editorials in which the editors reveal themselves to be complete idiots or, at best, merely determinedly ignorant.

What's to be done about crudzines? The obvious answer—or at least the first one to spring to my mind—would give Ted White several hours of work just deleting expletives. As far as this column is concerned, however, I intend to ignore them. While the ranks of the crudzines might be withered (and thus improved) if I were a fire-breathing dragon, I do not feel it is

worth wasting *your* time to demonstrate what a devastating critic I can be. In the pages of a fanzine, such a column might be instructive—even entertaining; in the pages of AMAZING, I would just come off a bully, with my criticisms appearing before an audience far wider than any fanzine editor could hope to reach.

This doesn't mean, however, that I have to say nice things about poor fanzines. There are dozens of truly excellent fanzines being published today, and at least a hundred others which are worthy of recommendation in one respect or another. This being the case, and since this column is intended as a guide for those who have received no (or very few) fanzines, it would be unconscionable of me to recommend a fanzine without any real substance.

I am the first to realize that no one sets out to publish a crudzine intentionally. I didn't, when I started publishing fanzines some 20 years ago—but the result, regardless of my intent, was a crudzine just the same. I continued to publish same through my first few years—I refuse to be pinned down to exactly how many—in fandom. In coming to the above conclusion, I had to ask myself whether I would want anyone judging fandom by my own early efforts, which really made the decision easier: I wouldn't want anyone judging *me* by my early efforts, much less fandom.

Having disposed of the crudzine question (neatly, I hope), there still remains the decision of just what I will be reviewing here, and how, and why. With several hundred fanzines to choose from, some criteria has to be developed.

Why not just review only the very best fanzines, and leave it at that?

To a certain extent, that's what I

hope to be able to do. But there is the matter of my "objectivity"—which I'm not sure I believe in. A reviewer expresses an opinion about a work—of needs, subjective—every time he or she says "good" or "bad", even though they may explain logically why they use the words and though you may agree with their logic. A review expresses a judgment formed on internalized (and, therefore, subjective) standards.

Like John and Susan before me, I happen to prefer a particular *kind* of fanzine—one which is about people, is well-written in the finest sense of amateur journalism, one edited with a sense of humor for people with a sense of humor. You, as a newcomer, may like other fanzines as well—or better. And so, while keeping in mind that what I'm looking for is quality writing and art in fanzines, I am making a concerted effort to review fanzines which I think *you* might like, even if they're not my particular favorites.

Another limitation I feel I should place on myself in writing about fanzines here is the matter of availability. Some fanzines go all out to achieve the highest possible circulation (it's the only way to win a Hugo)—but for a large number of people, fanzine publishing is a hobby, something done in the fan editor's spare time because he or she enjoys it. It is these latter people who, for me at least, most often put out the most enjoyable fanzines. Some of these people deliberately limit their 'zines circulation by not accepting or at least discouraging subscriptions; for them, a huge circulation is a bother that can quickly become a burden too heavy to bear. So a good fanzine, not necessarily to my tastes but seeking larger circulation will get a review here before

a "better" (to my tastes) fanzine that does not seek to attract subscriptions. I will, of course, honor any fan editor's request *not* to be reviewed here.

In most cases, I will not review first issues. (Exceptions will be made for new titles by long-established fan publishers.) While any fanzine can fold when the fan editor gets tired of publishing it, first issues are quite often prone to be last issues. So unless I have reason to believe the fan editor involved is reliable—at least to the point of returning subs if their fanzines fold—I won't review them here; the readers of this column have better things to do than send their money off into the vacuum of some neofan's gafia.

Finally, as a matter of fairness, I won't review the same fanzine in consecutive installments of *The Clubhouse*—which will not only allow me to spread the egoboo around a bit but prevent Terry Hughes (editor of *Mota*, reviewed in the first installment of this column) from being inundated in sticky quarters.

In any event, as you avail yourselves of these fanzines, you will note that many of them have fanzine review columns themselves—and that most of them are not limited by the constraints I have here placed on myself.

FORTUNATELY, THERE are several fanzines I can recommend this time around which are also to my tastes—and prime among these is Harry Warner Jr.'s history of stf fandom in the '50s, *A Wealth of Fable*, published by JoeD Siclari. This ends up coming to us in fanzine form as a result of Warner's refusal to write a puff for Advent: Publishers (who published his earlier volume of fanhistory, *All*

Our Yesterdays) or about their founder, making them appear to be a Major Event in fandom in the 1950s, and a dispute with the editors over the title and Harry's refusal to blow certain other events up to the proportion an Advent editor felt they deserved. (I found a few errors to nit-pick and also thought some things deserved more play than they got—but not the same things as that editor. It's my feeling that if either, or both, of us feels strongly enough about it, we can publish our own.) I admire Warner for sticking to his guns and writing the history *he* saw, based largely on his involvement with fans and fanzine publishing since the late 1930s. Furthermore, there are a number of distinct advantages in the fanzine format. First, there's the advantage of the fine illustrations which the hardcover cannot contain. Second, there's the advantage of being able to correct minor errors in the forthcoming hardcover (which will be financed by sales of the mimeographed edition). Third, there's the advantage of having the history exactly as it was written, which provides fine reading in the retelling of the tales of fandom's golden era. I cannot recommend the work too highly; it should be on every fan's bookshelf.

As I write this, only the first of the two mimeographed volumes (which are likely to become collectors items) is available, but both should be ready by the time this column sees print.

Another effort on the list which strikes my fancy is the British fanzine *Maya*. A fun fanzine, a delight to read. This issue contains what must be Walt Willis' first new fanzine piece in over a decade—worth the price of admission, short as it was—and delightful fare from Pete Weston, Tom Perry (*his* first in close to a decade,

too, I think), and Bob Shaw with "The Return of the Backyard Space-ship." Art editor Harry Bell is to be commended, too, for Jim Barker's inspired cartoon illustrations which appear throughout the issue. A bonus for those into heavy discussion of stf is *Speculation* 33, Pete Weston's fanzine, circulated with this issue of *Maya*; it contains a long profile of the late Paul Linebarger (known to stf fans as Cordwainer Smith) by John J. Pierce with a lot of material I had never seen before.

Starling is seldom about stf, per se; what it's about varies from issue to issue, with most of the columnists tackling the same pre-assigned theme from a different angle. This issue, unfortunately for me, is about music—but even being the musical illiterate that I am, I was much taken (i.e., I laughed a lot) with Jim Turner's "Ten Dumb Bozos I Hate". Another definite *Starling* plus is Joe Sanders' "With Malice Towards All: A Column About Books", one of the few ongoing columns of *criticism* in a field largely dominated by *reviews*. Regardless of the topic chosen, *Starling's* columnists always seem to have something to say and frequently say it well.

Rune is a large sprawling genzine that is also the club fanzine of the Minnesota Science Fiction Society—or Minn-STF to its friends, of which it has many. I should note that Fred Haskell was the editor of the issue being reviewed here, but David Emerson will be the editor of future issues and was so-listed up front to avoid confusion on the part of potential new readers who will be sending their subs to the right place and person if they use that listing. The intention is not to deprive Fred Haskell of his justly-deserved egoboo, and I hope Fred Haskell will bear with me.

Rune, under the editorship of Fred Haskell, deserves high marks for its exuberance and gusto, which seems to evince itself once every other page or so. The body of the material is written by the members of the club, and much of it is outstanding—in particular the editor-to-be's regular essay-cum-fanzine-review column, "Set Your Controls for the Heart of the Fanzine", and Jim Young's account of his interview with Phil Proctor of the Firesign Theatre. There's lots more—the issue is 80 pages, including a meaty lettercolumn in micro-elite type, and fare for those who like their fanzines humorous or serious, although the accent is mostly on the former.

WE COME NEXT to the fanzines which, though they're not my cup of tea, may well be yours—and which I recommend as sincerely as I recommend the fanzines above. (One way of thinking of this is that they *have* to be good, not being my "type" of fanzine, otherwise they would not have impressed me.) We have four more or less serious fanzines, all of which I would classify as semi-professional (they all have some newstand distribution), and two of which have won Hugos as Best Fanzine of the Year (which demonstrates, perhaps, how eclectic are my tastes).

Let's start with three-time Hugo winner *Locus*, the newspaper of the stf field. Without question, *Locus* is the best fanzine of its type—rightly described by many of its subscribers, fans and pros alike, as "indispensable." What's coming up in the pro-zines, from the new book publishers; what new magazines are planned; what stf films are in the works? Which professionals or well known fans have died, gotten married,

gafiated, given birth, gone on to Better (or Worse) Things, or fought off a pack of wild wolverines lately? Where are the conventions being held, what are the magazines/book publishers looking for in the way of material, who won the latest Nebulas or Hugos? Answers to these and other questions are *Locus*' stock-in-trade, and *Locus* does it all better than it's ever been done before.

A note: *Locus* won the Hugo at MidAmericon. Dena Brown's name was left off that award. Whether this was deliberate (and sexist)—as Dena believes and sets forth a strong case for in this issue—or unintentional, she deserves a *written* apology from the convention committee. As she points out in her editorial, such happenings are frequent in more mundane quarters but one expects better of our little microcosm.

The other multiple Hugo-winner is *Science Fiction Review* (or *SFR* for short), edited and in large part written by my (dare I say it?) alter ego over at *Galaxy*, Richard E. Geis. Dick and his letterhacks/columnists are often controversial and seldom fall short of being entertaining. Besides Geis and his critical and often insightful reviews of just about everything sf/fnal, there are also regular columnists like John Brunner and (though not this issue) Ted White, and occasionally pros and/or fans having at each other tooth and nail.

Nickelodeon is published on slick paper and features *Playboy*- and *Playgirl*-type nudes (of fans and pros rather than models), and for that reason perhaps should not be recommended for younger readers whose parents might not care for them getting such mail—but with that caveat in mind, it's a well-done magazine. Of

particular interest—at least to me—was "Izat Knows the Way to Flushing," Grant Carrington's and Tom Monteleone's account of the 2½ years they read unsolicited manuscripts for *AMAZING* and *FANTASTIC*. A very funny article indeed.

Luna Monthly is mostly reviews, and good ones, but its feature each issue is what makes it outstanding—a Paul Walker interview with an established sf professional. The three issues here include an interview with Ursula K. LeGuin and a two-part interview with Terry Carr—both fascinating reading. Back issues are available which include interviews with Jack Williamson, Michael Moorcock, H.L. Gold, Harlan Ellison—but, whoa there, you'll find out about that if you subscribe. There are dozens, all Major Names in the field, with more to come.

BECAUSE THIS COLUMN can get chopped or withheld entirely from an issue if a few authors undercount the length of their stories (unlikely, but it has happened), it will contain only reviews of fanzines and not announcements and/or news items which can become dated. Some information of that kind may find its way into Ted's editorials, in any event.

The first installment of this column has not seen print as I write this, so I have again reviewed fanzines that were available to me anyway. Next installment, no doubt, comes the deluge.

In the meantime, keep those fanzines and any questions you might have coming in to: rich brown, 2916 Linden Lane, Falls Church, Va. 22042—right, pee-lots?

—RICH BROWN

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